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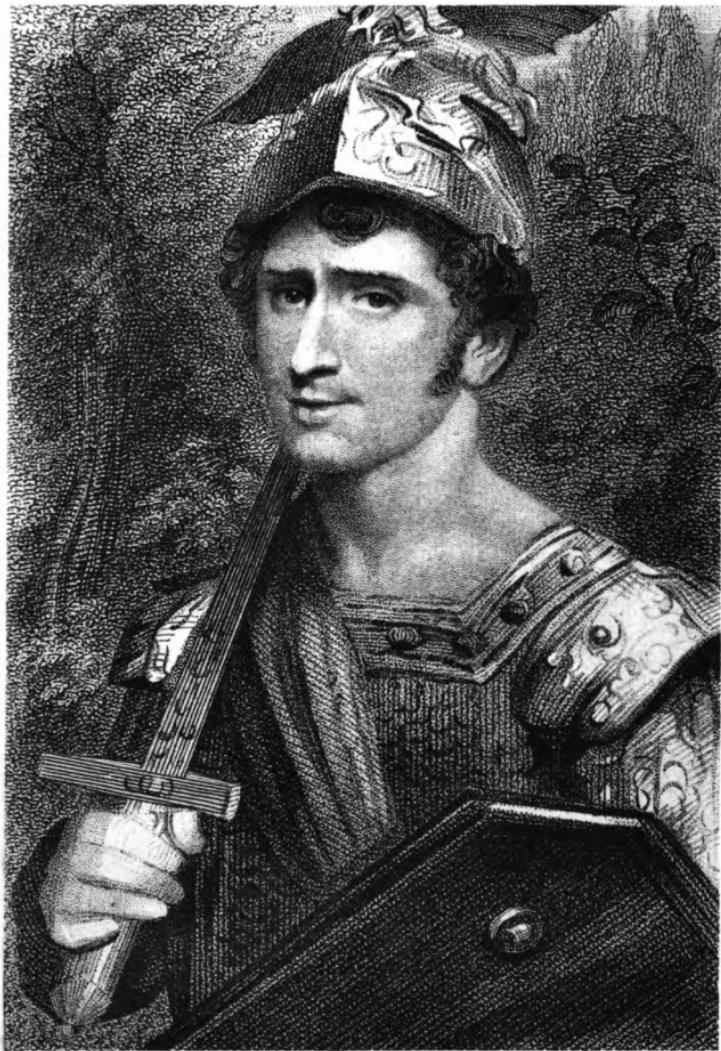


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**KEAN AND BOOTH
AND THEIR CONTEMPORARIES**



JAMES WILLIAM WALLACK.
AS RUGANTINO

*ACTS & DECREES
of Great Britain and the States*

*COLLECTED AND ARRANGED
FOR THE USE OF AMERICAN LAWYERS*

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*ACTORS AND ACTRESSES
of Great Britain and the United States*

**KEAN AND BOOTH
AND
THEIR CONTEMPORARIES**

EDITED BY

Brander Mathews and Laurence Hutton

New Illustrated Edition



**BOSTON
L. C. PAGE & COMPANY
*MDCCCC***

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Mrs Julia Arthur Cheney

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TO THE

DUNLAP SOCIETY,

**WITH THE HOPE THAT, LIKE THE WORKS OF WILLIAM DUNLAP
THEY MAY HELP TO KEEP ALIVE THE LOVE FOR WHAT
IS BEST IN THE ART OF ACTING AND
IN THE ACTED DRAMA,**

**THESE VOLUMES ARE INSCRIBED
BY THE EDITORS.**

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EDMUND KEAN.

1781—1833.

III.—I

Thou art the sun's bright child !
The genius that irradiates thy mind,
Caught all its purity and light from heaven !
Thine is the task, with mastery most perfect,
To bind the passions captive in thy train ;
Each crystal tear, that slumbers in the depth
Of feeling's fountain, doth obey thy call.
There's not a joy or sorrow mortals prove,
Or passion to humanity allied,
But tribute of allegiance owes to thee.
The shrine thouworshipest is nature's self,
The only altar genius deigns to seek.
Thine offering—a bold and burning mind,
Whose impulse guides thee to the realms of fame,
Where, crowned with well-earned laurels—all thine
own—
I herald thee to immortality.

LORD BYRON.



EDMUND KEAN
As Othello.

EDMUND KEAN.

[EDMUND KEAN.—Born in London, March 17, 1787. Sent to small day school in Soho, but constantly played truant. Made his first appearance on the stage as *Cupid* at the age of two. Played *Blue Beard* at Drury Lane about 1794-5, and *Page* to *Falstaff* during the same season. Strolled about London and the provinces acting and giving recitations and imitations of other actors, in small, ill-paid, irregular companies for some years. In 1804 he joined the Sheerness company, playing *George Barnwell* and *Harlequin*, at a salary of fifteen shillings a week, appearing always under the name of his reputed mother, Carey. In Belfast, during the season of 1804-5 he played *Osmyn* to the *Zara* of Mrs. Siddons. Played small parts at the Haymarket in 1806. Married Maria Chambers, 1808. Made his first appearance in London, as Mr. Kean, in the part of *Shylock* at Drury Lane, Jan. 26, 1814, and made his first decided success. This was followed by *Richard III.*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Iago*. First played *Macbeth*, Oct. 3, 1814; *Romeo*, Jan. 2, 1815; *Sir Giles Overreach*, Jan. 12, 1816. Played against Junius Brutus Booth, 1817. Sailed for America, 1820. Opened at Anthony Street Theatre, New York, Nov. 29, as *Richard III.* Visited America again in the autumn of 1825. Made his last appearance at the Park,

New York, as *Richard*, Dec. 5, 1826. Made his last appearance on any stage at Covent Garden, March 25, 1833, as *Othello* to the younger Kean's *Iago*. Died, May 15, 1833. Buried, Richmond Church.

B. M.
L. H.]

A FEW WORDS ABOUT EDMUND KEAN.

In my study, or my smokery rather, for little else but smoking is done in the small room to which only a chosen few are admitted, I have often sat until dawn, alternately reading memoirs of great actors of the past, and contemplating their portraits and death-masks which hang upon the walls ; and somehow I seem to derive a more satisfactory idea of their capabilities from their counterfeit presentments than from the written records of their lives.

What a void in the gallery of old masters of Dramatic Art is made by the absence of any portraits of Thespis, Roscius, or Burbage. We might perhaps get a taste of their quality, could we see some semblance of their features.

My impressions may have no worth. They are offered simply as the mere fancies of one who, while placidly puffing his midnight pipe, holds communion with the departed ; not by means of spiritism, but, as I have said, through the medium of their biographies, their pictures, and the plaster casts of their dead faces.

To begin with our earliest tragic actor of whom we have any authentic portrait, I can read no line of tragedy in the face of Thomas Betterton, although Cibber's opinion must be respected ; and I doubt if

Quin's features, of which I have no likeness worth considering, would convince me of his excellence in the higher range of tragedy. Certainly those of Barton Booth and Spranger Barry do not; yet all of them manifest much dignity. The beautiful features of Garrick evince wonderful mobility, but they suggest more of the comic than of the tragic quality. All his best known portraits depict him as the incomparable comedian; even in Hogarth's *Richard* the expression of horror seems weak; and as his friend and admirer, the great Johnson, declared that his death eclipsed the gayety of nations, I am inclined to believe that Davy was more favored by Thalia than by Melpomene. Old Macklin and George Frederick Cooke gaze at me with hard immobile features, denoting great force in a limited tragic range, such as hate, revenge and cunning. Nothing poetic or sublime can be found in either countenance, nor anything approaching the humorous, unless it be a leer in the latter's eye which indicates cajolery, or the sardonic mirth of *Shylock*, *Richard* or *Iago*. I cannot imagine either of these famed actors as being satisfactory in *Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* or *Othello*. From them I turn to the noble front of Kemble, whose calm majestic features seem to say, "See what a grace was seated on this brow!" whereon indeed is clearly set the impress of the tragic crown; and then to his sister, Siddons, the unexpressive she, whose lips and eyes made forever eloquent by Reynolds, tell us that her jealous mother, Melpomene, cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd and bound her in the limitations of the awful circle, although lavish Nature gave her the utmost range of human emotions, whether of joy or of grief, anger, remorse, or the very levity of

mirth. Neither Kemble nor Siddons was able to doff the buskin for the sock successfully. Their spheres were high, but circumscribed.

The sweet, sad face of the great German, Ludwig Devrient, and that of his nephew, Emil—by many considered the better actor—and the feline loveliness of Rachel, which clearly shows the scope of her ability, must be passed by as foreign to the subject; my object being simply to compare the portraits of some of the most renowned English tragedians, as they affect me, with that of our great Protagonist—Edmund Kean.

There is no art to find the mind's construction in the face, the living face; but Death frequently reveals some long hidden secret, a gleam of goodliness, a touch of tenderness, even a glimpse of humor, which life conceals from us. In the uncanny cast of the head of the dead Kean, which hangs above his portrait opposite my desk, I discover the comic as well as the tragic element, and in his ghastly, yet to me, fascinating features, only, do I perceive any trace of the two qualities combined. All this there is to be seen, by my eyes at least, in the distorted face, even in its last agony, wasted by disease and suffering; and more than this, I perceive a smile for the weary-hearted wife who sobbed forgiveness at his deathbed, loving to the last.

Lewes, who certainly knew more of this subject than I do, and who was apparently a careful critic, says that Kean had his limitation in tragedy; and that he was devoid of mirth. Lewes, as a lad, had seen Kean in life. I have seen only his dead, weird beauty; and contemplating this as I have often done, and recalling

the words of one who acted with and against him, I can hardly agree with Lewes. Once and only once my father gave me a glimpse of his reminiscences; on that occasion he, who seldom spoke of actors or the theatre, told me that in his opinion no mortal man could equal Kean in the rendering of *Othello's* despair and rage; and that above all, his not very melodious voice in many passages, notably that ending with "Farewell, *Othello's* occupation gone," sounded like the moan of ocean or the southing of wind through cedars. His peculiar lingering on the letter "l" often marred his delivery; but here, in the "Farewell," the tones of cathedral chimes were not more mournful. Now, I believe that he who could, as Kean did, perfectly express *Othello's* exquisite tenderness, as well as his sombre and fiercer passions, must have been capable of portraying the sublimest, subtlest, and profoundest emotions. The fact that Kean disliked to act *Hamlet* and failed to satisfy his critics in that character is no proof that his personation was false. If it was consistent with his conception and that conception was intelligible, as it must have been, it was true. What right have I, whose temperament and mode of thinking are dissimilar to yours, to denounce your exposition of such a puzzle as *Hamlet*? He is the epitome of mankind, not an individual; a sort of magic mirror in which all men and women see the reflex of themselves, and therefore has his story always been, is still, and will ever be the most popular of stage tragedies. As for the absence of mirth in Kean, the same has been said of all actors with features severely moulded. Kean played piano accompaniments to the songs he sang; he told quaint stories, and performed mad

pranks in the very ecstasy of merriment. Besides, he made a giant stride from *Harlequin* to *Hamlet*, a god-like step from the lowest to the highest plane. Still, after treading the boards on the stilts of Tragedy, his descent to the lower walk may not have been graceful. Most players of what is called the old school, which simply means the only school of acting, now closed I fear forever, had similar training; but how many have ascended the frail ladder of Fame so successfully as Kean? In not retaining the lighter parts of his repertory he showed a worthy ambition to be regarded as a tragedian, a denizen only of the highest realm of Art. If he failed to satisfy in the lesser serious rôles wherein he was but one of a group, it was because, like a riderless racer, he felt the need of weight. Accustomed to carry alone the burthen of a tragedy, he naturally felt ill at ease when others shared responsibility with him.

That the son of the only man who shook this monarch on his throne should be so bold in his defence may be considered strange, and indeed it is somewhat out of the way of human dealings; but I know that their rivalry was but the result of managerial trickery, which for a time estranged them. That their personal feelings for each other were of peace, the following anecdote related to me by my mother will attest.

She, with her husband, attended one of Kean's last performances in America, I forget when and where; the play was 'Richard III.' At the close of it my father rose, saying he wished to bid Kean good-bye, and left my mother alone in the private box to witness the farce or after-piece which in those days always supplemented tragedy. After some time had elapsed,

my father returned with moistened eyes, and sadly said, "Let us go home," before the conclusion of the farce, for which my mother wished to wait. On the way to their lodgings she could get nothing from him but sighs and monosyllabic responses to her many queries respecting his interview with Kean.

Days passed before she succeeded in coaxing from him an account of what had happened. He told her, at last, that when he announced himself at the door of Kean's dressing-room, the latter dismissed his valet and embraced his enemy. I can see this human trait even in this hideous dead face—my favorite portrait of the man. Hot toddies were sent for, and the two professional foes discussed their varied experiences since their last meeting. Declining Kean's invitation to supper, because he had to escort his wife home, and seeing that his comrade was much fatigued, my father assisted the little giant to disrobe, with many jokes between them. He told this story laughingly, but my mother said to me, "I am positive from your father's eyes and long silence on the subject, that there was more of pain than of pleasure in their parting."

They were so much alike in feature, in manner and in stature—although my father boasted of an inch above Kean in the latter particular and in that only—that in the scenes where Booth's brown hair and blue grey eyes were disguised by the traditional black wig of tragedy and by other stage accoutrements, he appeared to be the very counterpart of his black-eyed, swarthy rival. Their voices were unlike—the latter's harsh and usually unpleasing to the ear, the former's musical and resonant. Their reading of the text was not the same. Kean was careless, and gave flashes of light

after intervals of gloom. Booth was always even, a careful expounder of the text, a scholar, a student and —but enough of comparisons; they were made, *ad nauseam*, long years ago, and belong to the written history of the London stage; they need have no admission here. Suffice it that the mere similitude stamped the second comer as an imitator, although he had never seen his predecessor. Kean said, and I believe him, that he had never seen Cooke act; nevertheless many critics declared him to have been a copyist of the great George Frederick.

The word imitation seems to be used as a slur upon the actor alone. The painter and the sculptor go to Italy to study the old masters, and are praised for their good copies after this or that one. They are not censured for imitation; and why may not the actor also have his preceptor, his model? Why should he be denounced for following the footsteps of *his* old master? Why should he alone be required to depart from tradition? True, other artists see the works of their predecessors and can retain or reject beauties or blemishes at will; but the actor relies solely on uncertain records of his master's art, and thereby is frequently misled into the imitation of faults, rather than into the emulation of virtues.

In the main, tradition to the actor is as true as that which the sculptor perceives in Angelo, the painter in Raphael, and the musician in Beethoven; all of these artists having sight and sound to guide them. I, as an actor, know that could I sit in front of the stage and see myself at work I would condemn much that has been lauded; and could correct many faults which I feel are mine, and which escape the critic's notice.

But I cannot see or hear my mistakes as can the sculptor, the painter, the writer, and the musician. Tradition, if it be traced through pure channels, and to the fountain head, leads one as near to Nature as can be followed by her servant, Art. Whatever Betterton, Quin, Barton Booth, Garrick and Cooke gave to stagecraft, or as we now term it, business, they received from their predecessors ; from Burbage, and perhaps, from Shakspere himself, who, though not distinguished as an actor, well knew what acting should be ; what they inherited in this way they bequeathed in turn to their art, and we should not despise it. Kean knew without seeing Cooke, who in turn knew from Macklin, and so back to Betterton just what to do and how to do it. Their great mother Nature, who reiterates her teachings and preserves her monotone in motion, form and sound, taught them. There must be some similitude in all things that are True.

No reference to Kean can be made, it seems, without allusion to his frailties. That is well enough. It is the biographer's duty to be candid, and not to hide his hero's faults ; but those allusions have been mainly brutal. Why not deliver all with charity ? By permission of my friend, Dr. A. O. Kellogg, whose life-work has been the study and treatment of mental diseases, I quote from his yet unpublished essay on my father the following passage :

"The man who all his life-time was held in the grasp of an inexorable disease, the most sad that can afflict humanity, should not be judged too harshly for his shortcomings. Moreover, modern physiological science has shown conclusively that ineptitude is not always the result of vicious habits and indulgences,

but frequently the symptom of disease, as we feel assured was the case with the subject of this paper."

This is so applicable to Kean that I have introduced it here, in mitigation of what is deemed unpardonable in the actor when his exhausted nervous system, strained to the utmost tension, induces him to seek the treacherous aid of stimulants. The brain worker of any other walk or profession is excused when incapacitated by prostration on the ground of overwork ; not so the actor—Punch has no feelings ! I have no doubt that little Davy often suffered as much from the reaction of emotion, simulated, but nevertheless exhausting, as ever his mammoth friend, the learned Doctor, did.

As I gaze on the pitiable face of him, the waif, the reputed chick of Mother Carey, a stormy Petrel indeed, but perhaps the first really great tragedian that trod the English stage ; and at the same time recall my experiences with one of a similarly erratic brain, I am convinced that Kean's aberrations were constitutional, and beyond his control. The blots in the 'scutcheon of genius, like spots on the sun, are to us dim-eyed gropers in the vast Mystery, incomprehensible, inscrutable ! Who shall say that even our very evils, still existing in defiance of man's mightiest efforts to extirpate them, are not a part of the All-wise economy ?

Whilst pondering the ills of men like Edmund Kean, we must not forget the sacred precept : "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone."

EDWIN BOOTH.

During the Christmas vacation, Thomas Young was in the habit of giving frequent dinners to his friends and acquaintances, at which his son Charles was allowed to appear as soon as dessert was put on the table. On one of these occasions, as Charles was descending the stairs to the dining-room, in his smartest clothes, he saw a slatternly woman seated on one of the chairs in the hall, with a boy standing by her side, dressed in fantastic garb, with the blackest and most penetrating eyes he had ever beheld in human head. His first impression was that the two were strolling gypsies from Bartholomew Fair who had come for medical advice. He was soon undeceived; for he had no sooner taken his place by his father's side, and heard the servant whisper their presence in the hall, than, to his surprise, the master, instead of manifesting displeasure, smirked and smiled, and with an air of self-complacent patronage, desired his butler to "bring in the boy." On his entry he was taken by the hand, patted on the head, and requested to favor the company with a specimen of his histrionic ability. With a self-possession marvelous in one so young, he stood forth, knitted his brow, hunched up one shoulder-blade, and with sardonic grin and husky voice spouted forth *Gloster's* opening soliloquy in 'Richard III.' He then recited selections from some of our minor poets, both grave and gay, danced a hornpipe, sang songs, both comic and pathetic, and for fully an hour displayed such versatility as to elicit vociferous applause from his auditors, and substantial evidence of its sincerity by a shower of crown pieces and shillings. . . . The door was no sooner closed than everybody present desired to know the name of the youthful prodigy

who had so astonished them. The host replied that “this was not the first time he had had him to amuse his friends : that he knew nothing of the lad’s history or antecedents, but that his name was Edmund Kean; and that of the woman who seemed to have the charge of him, and was his supposititious mother, Carey.

JULIAN CHARLES YOUNG : ‘Memoirs of Charles Mayne Young,’ *chap. i.*

Kean himself, at times, would claim the parentage of the Duke of Norfolk ; a West-India merchant, by the name of Duncan ; and one Edward Kean, in the employ of a Mr. Wilmot, a builder. Thus, under the names Howard, Duncan, Kean, and sometimes Clarke (which latter he assumed from one of his early patronesses), he variously amused his own imagination, and completely mystified the fact to others. But to this he was entitled, as, without doubt, he knew as little about the matter as any unwise child could be supposed ; one person, Miss Tidswell, for many years an actress at Drury Lane Theatre, was understood to be in the secret ; but as her accounts, like those of Kean, were not always homologous, she has still bequeathed to us as much doubt on the subject. Miss Tidswell sometimes called herself his aunt, and Kean sometimes saluted her as mother. These, however, might have been mere playful terms, “signifying nothing.”

According to Miss Tidswell’s general story, Kean was the child of Edward Kean, by Nancy Carey, an actress ; and born in Gray’s Inn, 1789. Scarcely was he two years of age, when his mother abandoned him; Miss Tidswell then generously took him under her protection, and brought him up in London.



But young Carey was a wild, ungovernable boy—frank-hearted, but wayward from his infancy—frequently would he “take to his heels and run” from “Aunt Tid,” and was sometimes absent for a whole fortnight together. On one occasion, after an anxious search, he was found in a sad pickle, though good spirits, at a public house in St. George’s Fields, collecting a few pence, as largess for the amusement he had afforded the company in the “tap,” by reciting, tumbling, and singing. His protectress, at length, procured a little collar to be placed about his neck, on which was engraved—“*This boy belongs to No. 9, Lisle Street, Leicester Square.*”—So incorrigible was the lad, that “poor Tid” was frequently compelled to shut him up during her absence.

GEORGE RAYMOND: ‘Life of Elliston,’ *period ii., chap. I.*

The car, in which were *Sylvia* and *Cymon*, was drawn by two beautiful horses; and at my feet, as *Cymon*, lay a beautiful cupid. Before the piece was brought out, I had a number of children brought to me, that I might choose a cupid. One struck me, with a fine pair of black eyes, who seemed by his looks and little gestures to be most anxious to be chosen as the representative of the God of Love; I chose him, and little then did I imagine that my little cupid would eventually become a great actor; the then little urchin, was neither more nor less than Edmund Kean. He has often told me, that he ever after this period felt a regard for me, from the circumstance of my having preferred him to the other children. I consider my having been the means of introducing this great

genius to the stage, one of my most pleasurable recollections.

MICHAEL KELLY : 'Reminiscences,' vol. ii., p. 22.

There was another novelty in the witchery,—at the words "Mingle, mingle ye, that mingle may,"—a great number of little boys came on as spirits ; I must confess it produced something like laughter ; they were, however, persisted in for several nights, but at last discontinued, for there was no keeping the little boys in order ; they made such a terrible noise behind the scenes ; one little urchin used to play all kinds of tricks ; and that one, odd enough to say, was my ci-devant *Cupid*, Edmund Kean, and, on his account, Kemble dismissed the whole tribe of phantoms.

Ibid., vol. ii., p. 65.

It was on my return home for one of my Christmas holidays that in passing through Birmingham I found the manager of the theatre there (which my father had relinquished on entering on his Manchester speculation) had sent tickets for a box. Conceiving it proper that the civility should be acknowledged by the appearance of some of our family, I went with one of my sisters and a friend. 'Richer, the Funambulist !' was the large-lettered attraction of the playbills. The play was the 'Busy Body,' very badly acted, and the after-piece a serious pantomime on the ballad of 'Alonzo and Imogene.' Richer represented the *Baron* "all covered with jewels and gold," and a female porpoise, rejoicing in the name of Watson, being the manager's wife, ungainly and tawdry, was the caricature of the "fair *Imogene*." As if in studied contrast

to this enormous “hill of flesh,” a little mean-looking man, in shabby green satin dress (I remember him well), appeared as the hero, *Alonzo the Brave*. It was so ridiculous that the only impression I carried away was that the hero and heroine were the worst in the piece. How little did I know, or could guess, that under that shabby green satin dress was hidden one of the most extraordinary theatrical geniuses that have ever illustrated the dramatic poetry of England! When, some years afterwards, public enthusiasm was excited to the highest pitch by the appearance at Drury Lane of an actor of the name of Kean, my astonishment may easily be conceived on discovering that the little insignificant *Alonzo the Brave* was the grandly impassioned personator of *Othello*, *Richard*, and *Shylock*!

W. C. MACREADY : ‘Reminiscences,’ chap. I, 1793–1808.

Mrs. Siddons was to open her engagement in *Zara*, Kean playing *Osmyn*. As usual, instead of learning his part, he employed the interim between her arrival and the play in drinking with some friends with such success that, when he came upon the stage, the whole of his part had vanished from his memory. He could not recollect more than two or three lines, and was therefore reduced to the necessity of inventing as he went on — it may easily be supposed with what effect. His performance was a tissue of nonsense ; sentences without meaning ; tawdry phrases ; drunken absurdities of all sorts. His auditors, luckily, were not critical ; but the “star” of the evening looked lowering upon him, and expressed her unmitigated disgust.

III.—2

The next play to be performed was ‘Douglas,’ and in this Kean played *Young Norval* to Mrs. Siddons’s *Lady Randolph*. Whether he was ashamed of the past, or was ambitious of showing the great tragic actress that “he too was an actor,” we cannot say; but he played the part with infinite pathos and spirit. Mrs. Siddons was surprised into admiration. After the play (this is Kean’s own account) she came to him, and patting him on the head, said—“You have played very well sir, *very well*. It’s a pity,—*but there’s too little of you to do anything.*” The reader will smile over this prophecy and its refutation.

BARRY CORNWALL, (R. W. Proctor) : ‘Life of Kean,’ chap. 3.

When Kean first entered upon the stage, that evening [Drury Lane, Jan. 26, 1814,] the spectators saw that something decisive (good or bad) was about to happen. His quick, flashing, and intelligent eye, and his quiet resolute bearing, denoted a sure result,—*Cæsar*, or nothing. “I could scarcely draw my breath,” said Dr. Drury to Kean on the following day, “when you first came upon the stage. But directly you took your position, and leaned upon your cane, I saw that all was right.” Kean was received with the usual encouraging plaudits bestowed on a new actor; and he acknowledged them with a bow eminently graceful. This was so far in his favor. His audience now took notice of him, and saw a figure and countenance that Titian would have been pleased to paint. His thin, dark face, full of meaning, and taking, at every turn, a sinister or vigilant expression, was just adapted to the ascetic and revengeful *Shylock*—

He spoke,—“Three thousand ducats? well!” and you were satisfied that there would be no failure. As he proceeded, the feeling of the audience went altogether with him. His reply to *Bassanio* (who says, “Be assured you may take his bond”), “I will be assured I may,” obtained applause; and his fine retort on *Antonio* (which shames, or ought to cast shame on the Christian merchant),

Fair Sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last ;
You spurned me such a day ; another time
You called me—dog ; and for these courtesies
I'll lend you thus much moneys—

was received with acclamations. At one time, it was feared that his voice would fail, and the manager hurried after him with a glass of negus, as a restorative; but it was an idle apprehension. He went on, still gaining ground, until he arrived at the scene with *Salarino*, where those fierce and unanswerable interrogations on behalf of the Jew (“Hath not a Jew eyes,” etc.,) are forced from him: when, knitting himself up, he gave them forth with terrible energy, and drew down a thunder of applause. And in this way he went on, victorious, to the end; gathering glory after glory, shout after shout, till the curtain fell. Nothing like that acting—nothing like that applause, had, for many previous years, resounded within the walls of ancient or modern Drury. It was a new era. The actor and the theatre were both poor, and each, separately, was unable to rise. But together—like certain salts and other substances which are formidable only in conjunction—they were competent to encounter anything. That day was golden-lettered in theatrical annals. The audience went home wondering

and delighted ; the committee more than content ; the actor himself triumphant :—

That day he overcame the Nervii !

Ibid., chap. II.

DRURY LANE, Jan. 26 [1814].—We are happy to state, that the evening of this day added a very bright star to the dramatic hemisphere in the person of a MR. KEAN of much provincial celebrity ; who made his first appearance at this theatre in the character of *Shylock*, in the ‘Merchant of Venice.’ This gentleman is, as we have been informed, a nephew of the late Mr. Moses Kean, a celebrated mimic, whom we well remember. His father, one of three brothers, was an architect, and his mother was a daughter of the facetious and eccentric George Saville Carey. The young man was himself educated at Eton. He is about 24 years of age, and rather below the middle stature ; his countenance is full of expression ; his voice is sonorous, though somewhat harsh ; his enunciation distinct, and varied as suits the occasion ; his by-play is very good, and his attention to the business of the scene unintermittent. We have rarely seen a performer on the stage who appeared to copy less from others in his mode of acting ; and this of itself, where judgment is not wanting, is a great merit. His performance, throughout, received great applause ; and we doubt not Mr. Kean will attain, in time, the highest honors of his profession. He has since performed *Richard III.* with equal merit and success, to very crowded houses.

European Magazine, Feb., 1814.

At Drury Lane, and saw Kean for the first time.

He played *Richard*, I believe, better than any man I ever saw ; yet my expectations were pitched too high, and I had not the pleasure I expected. The expression of malignant joy is the one in which he surpasses all men I have ever seen. And his most flagrant defect is want of dignity. His face is finely expressive, though his mouth is not handsome, and he projects his lower lip ungracefully ; yet it is finely suited to *Richard*. He gratified my eye more than my ear. His action very often was that of Kemble, and this was not the worst of his performance, but it detracts from his boasted originality. His declamation is very unpleasant, but my ear may in time be reconciled to it, as the palate is to new cheese and tea. It often reminds me of Blanchard's. His speech is not fluent, and his words and syllables are too distinctly separated. His finest scene was with *Lady Anne*, and his mode of lifting up her veil to watch her countenance was exquisite. The concluding scene was unequal to my expectation, though the fencing was elegant, and his sudden death-fall was shockingly real. But he should have lain still. Why does he rise, or awake, rather, to repeat the spurious lines ? He did not often excite a strong persuasion of the truth of his acting, and the applause he received was not very great. . . . To recur to Kean, I do not think he will retain all his popularity, but he may learn to deserve it better, though I think he will never be qualified for heroic parts. He wants a commanding figure and a powerful voice. His greatest excellences are a fine pantomimic face and remarkable agility.

HENRY CRABB ROBINSON : 'Reminiscences,' vol. i.,
chap. 17, March 7, 1814.

Such effect had the passionate energy of Kean's acting on his [Lord Byron's] mind, that once in seeing him play *Sir Giles Overreach*, he was so affected as to be seized with a sort of convulsive fit.

THOMAS MOORE : 'Life of Byron,' vol. iii., 1814.

To such lengths did he at this time carry his enthusiasm for Kean that when Miss O'Neill soon after appeared. . . . he refused to go to see her act. I endeavored sometimes to persuade him into witnessing one at least of her performances, but his answer was (punning on Shakspere's word "unannealed")—"No—I'm resolved to continue un-O'Neilled."

Ibid., foot note.

Just returned from seeing Kean in *Richard*. By Jove, he is a soul! Life—nature—truth, without exaggeration or diminution. Kemble's *Hamlet* is perfect; but *Hamlet* is not Nature. *Richard* is a man; and Kean is *Richard*.

LORD BYRON : Thomas Moore's 'Life of Byron,' vol. iii., Feb. 19, 1814.

Kean—the prodigy—is cried up as a second Garrick—as a reformer of the stage, etc., etc.; it may be so. He may be right and all the actors wrong; this is certain, he is either very good, or very bad—I think decidedly the latter; and I find no medium opinions concerning him.

WASHINGTON IRVING : 'Life and Letters,' vol i., chap. 19, Dec. 28, 1815.

I have seen Kean in several of his characters, but

oftener in *Shylock* and *Richard* than in any other of his representations, and always with increased delight. If Kean never saw Cooke, and he tells me he never did, the similitude in certain parts of their acting as well as the conception of the true character seems to me to be still more wonderful.

JOHN HOWARD PAYNE: Letter, London, June 19, 1817. Gabriel Harrison's 'Payne,' chap. iii., p. 67.

We must apologize for an oversight in our last week's article. The allusion made to Mr. Kean's acting of *Luke* in the 'City Madam' was totally inapplicable to the part and to the play. We were thinking of his performance of the concluding scenes of the 'New Way to Pay Old Debts.' We confounded one of Massinger's strange heroes with the other. It was *Sir Giles Overreach* we meant; nor are we sure that our remark was just, even with this explanation. When we consider the intense tone in which Mr. Kean thinks it proper (and he is quite as likely to be in the right as his blundering critic) to pitch the temperament of that monstrous character from the beginning, it follows but logically and naturally, that where the wild uncontrollable man comes to be baffled of his purpose, his passion should assume a frenzied manner, which it was altogether absurd to expect should be the same with the manner of the cautious and self-restraining *Cantwell*, even when he breaks loose from all bonds in the agony of his final exposure. We never felt more strongly the good sense of the saying, "Comparisons are odious." They betray us not seldom into bitter errors of judgment; and sometimes,

as in the present instance, into absolute matter-of-fact blunders. But we have recanted.

CHARLES LAMB: the *Examiner*, Aug. 8, 1819.

But the greatest crowning of my “eager walks up to town to go to the play” was when Edmund Kean came upon the London stage; and I saw him in all his first perfection. The way in which he electrified the town by his fire, his energy, his vehement expression of natural emotion and passion in such characters as *Othello* (in my opinion his masterpiece during his early and mature career), *Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Richard III.*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, *Sir Edward Mortimer* and *Shylock* (certainly his grandest performance in his later days), after the comparatively cold and staid propriety of John Kemble, was a thing never to be forgotten. Such was the enthusiasm of his audiences that the pit-door at as early an hour as three o’clock in the afternoon used to be clustered round, like the entrance to a hive of bees, by a crowd of play-goers determined to get places; and I had to obtain extra leave for quitting school *early* to make me one of them.

CHARLES AND MARY COWDEN CLARKE: ‘Recollections of Writers,’ chap. i.

The monument [to Cooke, erected by Kean in St. Paul’s churchyard, New York,] was finished on June 4, 1821, the day Mr. Kean terminated his first visit to America. He repaired in the afternoon to pay his last devotion to it. He was singularly pleased with the eulogistic lines on Cooke:—

Three Kingdoms claim his birth,
Both Hemispheres pronounce his worth.

Tears fell from his eyes in abundance, and as the evening closed he walked Broadway, listened to the chimes of Trinity, returned again to the churchyard, and sang, sweeter than ever, 'Those Evening Bells' and 'Come o'er the Sea.' I gazed upon him with more interest than had ever before been awakened by his stage representations. I fancied (and it was not altogether fancy) that I saw a child of genius on whom the world at large bestowed its loftiest praises, while he himself was deprived of that solace which the world cannot give—the sympathies of the heart.

DR. FRANCIS : 'Old New York,' pp. 227-8, 229-30, 233-34.

Poor Kean ! I was but a boy when I saw him in his decadence—worn out in constitution, not by years—but I shall never forget him. His style was impulsive, fitful, flashing, abounding in quick transitions ; scarcely giving you time to think, but ravishing your wonder, and carrying you along with his impetuous rush and change of expression. But this seeming spontaneity was not *chance-work* ; much of it, most of it, was carefully premeditated and prepared. His delivery of *Othello's* "Farewell" ran on the same tones and semitones, had the same rests and breaks, the same *forte* and *piano*, the same *crescendo* and *diminuendo*, night after night, as if he spoke it from a musical score. And what beautiful, what thrilling music it was ! the music of a broken heart—the cry of a despairing soul.

GEORGE VANDENHOFF : 'Leaves from an Actor's Note Book,' chap. 2, pp. 22-3.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE NEW YORK MIRROR.

Gentlemen :—If you think the following particulars worth the space they will occupy in your excellent journal, perhaps you will not object to their insertion. I was in one of the boxes of Covent Garden Theatre, on Monday, March 25, 1833; the last night that great actor, Edmund Kean, appeared on the stage. His health, for months, had been so rapidly declining, and his physical energies become so visibly impaired by those long-indulged irregularities, which had broken down a naturally vigorous but abused constitution, that his acting was rendered generally feeble, unsatisfactory, and often painful; and even his inability to appear at all when announced was by no means a rare occurrence. The last effort he made, at all worthy of his former fame, was in the early part of the winter, when the importance of having his *Othello* brought for the first time in conjunction with the rival talents of Macready, in *Iago*, gave a stimulus to his powers of body and mind, sufficient to sustain him throughout the character. It was universally admitted, that never did his genius display itself more triumphantly. On this occasion, however, he was advertised for the same favorite part, to the *Iago* of his son, Charles, who, having never before acted with him on the London boards, was warmly greeted on his entrée by a tolerably numerous audience; but when in the second scene the father entered, as *Othello*, followed by the son, as *Iago*, the house rung with reiterated acclamations. The father continued bowing for a considerable time, without producing any diminution in the enthusiastic and loud cheering which prevailed, when, as if suddenly awakened to the sense of the

circumstance, he turned, and taking his son by the hand, led him a step or two forward, and, with a graceful bow, and one of his most fascinating and characteristics smiles, presented him to the audience. The waving of hats and handkerchiefs, and the doubly-redoubled plaudits which ensued, checked, for an unusually long period, every attempt made by them to proceed with their parts. There was nothing distinguishable in Kean's performance of the first and second acts, from his usual personification of *Othello*, except a more than ordinary feebleness in his voice, action and gait; which, as he had not many weeks previous broken down in the midst of the part, was imputed to a designed reservation, or perhaps the fear of too early exhausting what physical strength he might otherwise be enabled to call up in order to sustain the third and latter acts: when, however, he came to that memorable apostrophe—"Now, forever, farewell!" etc., the whole of it was breathed forth with all that melodious melancholy, so noted in his brighter days, and so happily described by the critic, Hazlitt, as "striking upon the heart and imagination like some divine music," only mingled with a far greater degree of feeling than I had ever before observed; in fact, so deeply affecting were his tones, that, as he half sobbed out the last line, "Farewell!—*Othello's*—occupation's—gone!" I remarked to a friend near me, "Poor fellow! I fear that a consciousness of *Othello's* despairing moans being applicable to himself personally, has touched his own feelings." I seldom remember Kean's failing, in this particular point, to elicit less than three hearty rounds on ordinary occasions; but on *this*, they were increased

in number and duration. He remained abstracted and motionless, his chin resting on his breast, and his eyes fixed on the ground for many seconds after every murmur of applause had subsided ; then raising his head from his chest, as from a forgetful slumber, he seemed partially aroused into a sense of his situation with the audience and the necessity of proceeding ; but, instead of that sudden and infuriate alternation—that towering passion which used to threaten the destroyer of his peace with irresistible and immediate annihilation ; he turned slowly and feebly, tottered a few steps towards *Iago* (who, seeing his sinking state, approached him), and, leaning on his arm for support, and unable to seize him by the throat, he uttered in disjointed accents, only audible to those quite near him—“Villain—be—sure—you—prove”—then throwing himself upon his son’s neck, in a faint and faltering voice, added, “*O God! I am dying! speak to them, Charles!*” The house, though somewhat prepared for a result of the kind, did not anticipate such a decided prostration of his faculties, and kept up their applause for nearly a minute, endeavoring to cheer him by showing every mark of indulgence : at length Charles made an attempt to assist his father forward, when, his look and manner indicating the most pitiable helplessness, it became evident he could no longer stand alone, and the audience with one accord rose and cried, “*Take him off!*” whereupon, one of the performers came on from the wing, and poor Kean, who was trying to bow, was borne off and carried to a house in the vicinity for the night, and the next day removed to his own residence at Richmond, where he lingered about six weeks before he expired. Thus

terminated the fitful career of an actor—"take him for all in all, we ne'er shall look upon his like again!" I have the honor to be, gentlemen, very respectfully your friend and obedient servant,

JAMES H. HACKETT.

New York Mirror, Feb. 22, 1834.

While Kean was once rehearsing on the Birmingham stage a conversation ensued regarding the merits of the two rival tragedians ; and after all present had expressed, pretty unequivocally, their likes and dislikes, Kean *wound up* the agreeable colloquy by the following piece of dexterity :—"I have been told," said he, striking into the conversation, "that most people imagine they cannot praise me, without detracting in some measure from the fair fame of John Kemble ; this is a mistake, '*let every tub stand on its own bottom*' say I. John Kemble was an actor, a very great actor; but however great an actor he was, I can show you one thing he could not do!" So saying, Kean with the elasticity of an harlequin, *cut a summerset*, to the no small amusement of those histrionic critics.

'The Popular Portrait Gallery.'

Mrs. Garrick, who went to the theatre every night of Kean's performance, was not, it seems, entirely satisfied with his personification of *Hamlet*. She wrote to him, and requested that he would call on her. He went, and she placed him in her husband's chair. It was the only chair that she would allow him to sit in, and she said that she would keep it solely for him. At the same time, she insisted that in the closet scene our tragedian was "too tame,"—that is to say, he was

tamer than her husband. She made him act it over again with her, and play it in her "husband's manner." He was tired to death of this instruction at second-hand, (well he might be,) but did not altogether disregard it. In fact, he acted the closet scene afterward in "Garrick's manner," and never satisfied himself or others. He had always considered *Hamlet* to be his best part; he had studied it more than any other, and was outrageous at having been coaxed into playing it in a manner contrary to his judgment.

BARRY CORNWALL: 'Life of Kean,' chap. 13.

One of my earliest and vivid recollections—I was then quite a child—was a meeting with "the great Edmund Kean," as my sister called him. He was her pet hero. She had seen him act, and through friends, had a slight acquaintance with him. Wishing her little "birdie," as she often called me, to share all her pleasures, she often took me with her to the Green for the chance of seeing him as he strolled there with his aunt, old Miss Tidswell. The great man had been very ill, so that all our expectations had been frequently disappointed. At last about noon one very warm sunny day, my sister's eager eye saw the two figures in the far distance. It would have been bad manners to appear to be watching, so in a roundabout way our approach was made. As we drew near I would gladly have run away. I was startled, frightened at what I saw—a small pale man with a fur cap, and wrapped in a fur cloak. He looked to me as if come from the grave. A stray lock of very dark hair crossed his forehead, under which shone eyes which looked dark, and yet bright as lamps. So large were

they, so piercing, so absorbing, I could see no other features. I shrank from them behind my sister, but she whispered to me that it would be unkind to show any fear, so we approached and were kindly greeted by the pair. Oh, what a voice was that which spoke ! It seemed to come from far away—a long, long way behind him. After the first salutation it said, “Who is this little one?” When my sister had explained, the face smiled—(I was reassured by the smile and the face looked less terrible)—and he asked me where I went to school, and which of my books I liked best. Alas ! I could not then remember that I liked any, but my ever good angel-sister said she knew I was fond of poetry, for I had just won a prize for recitation. Upon this the face looked still more kindly on me, and we all moved together to a seat under the trees. Then the far away hollow voice—but it was not harsh—spoke again, as he put his hand in mine, and bade me tell him whether I liked my school walks better than the walks at Richmond. This was too much, and it broke the ice of my silence. No, indeed, Greenwich Park was very pretty—so was Blackheath, with its donkeys, when we were, on occasions much too rare, allowed to ride them. But Richmond ! Nothing could be so beautiful. I was asked to name my favorite sports, and whether I had ever been in a punt—which I had ; and caught fish—which I had not. My tongue, once untied, ran on and on, and had after a time to be stopped, for my sister and the old lady thought I should fatigue the invalid. But he would not part just yet. He asked my name, and when it was told exclaimed, “Oh, the old ballad—do you know it?—which begins,—

Oh, my Helen,
 There is no tellin'
 Why love I fell in ;
 The grave my dwellin',
 Would I were well in !

I know now why with ‘My Helen, love I fell in ;’ it is because she loves poetry, and she loves Richmond. Will my Helen come and repeat her poetry to me some day ?” This alarming suggestion at once silenced my prattle, and my sister had to express for me the pleasure and honor I was supposed to feel. Here the interview ended. The kind hand was withdrawn which had lain in mine so heavily, and yet looked so thin and small. I did not know then how great is the weight of weakness. It was put upon my head, and I was bid God-speed ! I was to be sent for some day soon. But the day never came ; the school-days were at hand ; those wondrous eyes I never saw, and that distant voice I never heard again !

HELEN FAUCIT, Lady Martin : ‘On Some of Shakespeare’s Female Characters,’ pp. 106–108.

In private life Kean was the most contradictory character I ever met with : affable and overbearing by turns—in either case without sufficient cause. Lavishly, nay, foolishly liberal, or niggardly mean and suspicious ; with a refined taste for music, he would listen attentively, and laugh heartily at a blackguard’s song in a beer-house. Devotedly fond of children and animals, he was sometimes brutal in his domestic behavior. An enthusiastic admirer of flowers, birds, shrubs, and Nature in her simplest garb, he would spend days or weeks in a den of vice and depravity.

His chosen associates were selected from the lowest dregs of society—prize-fighters, thief-catchers and knaves and fools of low degree, as gross as ignorance made drunk—though sought after and courted by all the rich and noble in mind or station. When sober he was elegantly courteous and gentleman-like in his deportment, *if he thought proper*; but when intoxicated, he was disgustingly coarse, and vulgar in the extreme.

JOE COWELL: ‘Thirty Years Among the Players,’
part I, chap. 16.

It was on the night of our hero’s first playing *Richard*, that Bannister (“Jack Bannister,” famous for his good acting and good nature) achieved his memorable piece of wit. “This is really a wonderful man,” said Mr. V. “Yes,” replied Mr. Z., insidiously, “I understand that he is an admirable *Harlequin*.” “That I am certain of,” retorted Bannister; “for he has jumped over all our heads.”

BARRY CORNWALL: ‘Life of Kean,’ *chap. 16.*

Kean exulted, as much as the humblest actor could do, at the applause that he forced from his audiences. The praise of individuals, however sincere or valuable, was nothing to that of the public. And to the praise of lords in particular, he seems to have been more than usually indifferent. When he returned home after his great triumph in *Sir Giles Overreach*, his wife met him at the door. “Well,” said she, eagerly, “well, —what did Lord Essex think of it?” “D—n Lord Essex!” retorted the contemptuous tragedian. “*The pit ROSE at me!*”

Ibid., chap. 16.

III.—3

There are many causes for the growth of naturalism in dramatic art, and amongst them we should remember the improvement in the mechanism of the stage ; for instance, there has been a remarkable development in stage-lighting. In old pictures you will observe the actors constantly standing in a line, because the oil-lamps of those days gave such an indifferent illumination, that everybody tried to get into what was called the focus—the “blaze of publicity” furnished by the “float,” or footlights. The importance of this is illustrated by an amusing story of Edmund Kean, who one night played *Othello* with more than his usual intensity. An admirer who met him in the street next day was loud in his congratulations : “I really thought you would have choked *Iago*, Mr. Kean—you seemed so tremendously in earnest.” “In earnest!” said the tragedian, “I should think so ! Hang the fellow, he was trying to keep me out of the focus !”

HENRY IRVING'S ‘Harvard Address,’ reported in *The Critic*, April 4, 1885.

The greatest artist is he who is greatest in the highest reaches of his art, even although he may lack the qualities necessary for the adequate execution of some minor details. It is not by his faults, but by his excellences, that we measure a great man. The strength of a beam is measured by its weakest part, of a man by his strongest. Thus estimated, Edmund Kean was incomparably the greatest actor I have seen, although even warm admirers must admit that he had many and serious defects. His was not a flexible genius. He was a very imperfect mime—or more correctly speaking his miming power, although admirable within a

certain range, was singularly limited in its range. He was tricky and flashy in style. But he was an actor of such splendid endowments in the highest departments of the art, that no one in our day can be named of equal rank, unless it be Rachel, who was as a woman what he was as a man.

The irregular splendor of his power was felicitously characterized in the saying of Coleridge that "seeing Kean act was reading Shakspere by flashes of lightning," so brilliant and so startling were the sudden illuminations and so murky the dull intervals. His physical aptitudes were such as confined him to the strictly tragic passions; and for these he was magnificently endowed. Small and insignificant in figure, he could at times become impressively commanding by the lion-like power and grace of his bearing. I remember the last time I saw him play *Othello*, how puny he appeared beside Macready, until in the third act, when roused by *Iago's* taunts and insinuations, he moved towards him with a gouty hobble, seized him by the throat, and, in a well-known explosion, "Villain! be sure you prove," etc., seemed to swell into a stature which made Macready appear small. On that very evening, when gout made it difficult for him to display his accustomed grace, when a drunken hoarseness had ruined the once matchless voice, such was the irresistible pathos—manly not tearful—which vibrated in his tones and expressed itself in his look and gestures, that old men leaned their heads upon their arms and fairly sobbed. Kean vigilantly and patiently rehearsed every detail, trying the tones until his ear was satisfied, practicing looks and gestures until his artistic sense was gratified; and having

once regulated these, he never changed them. The consequence was that, when he was sufficiently sober to stand and speak, he could act his part with the precision of a singer who has thoroughly learned his air. One who often acted with him informed me that, when Kean was rehearsing on a new stage, he actually counted the number of steps he had to take before reaching a certain spot, or before uttering a certain word ; these steps were justly regarded by him as part of the mechanism which could no more be neglected than the accompaniment to an air could be neglected by a singer. *Othello*, which is the most trying of all Shakspere's parts was Kean's masterpiece. His *Skylock* was free from faults, and indeed was a marvelous performance. From the first moment that he appeared and leant upon his stick to listen gravely while moneys are requested of him, he impressed the audience, as Douglas Jerrold used to say, "like a chapter of Genesis." The overpowering remonstrant sarcasm of his address to *Antonio*, and the sardonic mirth of his proposition about the "merry bond," were fine preparations for the anguish and rage at the elopement of his daughter, and for the gloating anticipations of revenge on the Christians. Anything more impressive than the passionate recrimination and wild justice of argument, "Hath not a Jew eyes?" has never been seen on our stage.

GEORGE HENRY LEWES : 'On Actors and the Art of Acting,' chap. I, pp. 13-14, 15-16, 17-18, 20-21.

JOHN HOWARD PAYNE.

1791-1852.

Upon the stage, a glowing boy appeared
Whom heavenly smiles and grateful thunders cheered ;
Then, through the throng, delighted murmurs ran,
The boy “enacts more wonders than a man.”

THEODORE S. FAY.



JOHN HOWARD PAYNE.

JOHN HOWARD PAYNE.

Of John Howard Payne, the actor, the world knows but little ; yet in the early part of the present century he was prominent on both sides the Atlantic, not only as a writer of plays, but as himself a player. On the American stage he was the first of a long line of Infant Phenomena ; his popularity in his own country almost equalling that of the celebrated Master Betty in England, whose contemporary he was.

Payne was born in the city of New York on June 9, 1791, and not in Boston, Mass., as the inscription over his temporary grave in Tunis for so many years declared. He received his early schooling in Boston, however, and was distinguished by his efforts in declamation ; his friends and school-fellows believing him to be a prodigy of eloquence, even before his ambition to excel upon the stage was fired by the portraits of the young English "Roscius" in character, which he saw in the shop windows of Boston, and by the stories of Betty's marvelous success which were carried to America by every English mail.

With little or no professional training Master Payne, at the age of seventeen, but looking much younger, made his first bow to the public as an actor, at the Park Theatre, New York, on Feb. 24, 1809. Like Forrest, and scores of the young *débutants* who have

followed him, he appeared in Holmes's 'Douglas' as *Young Norval*, that putative son of the frugal swain, who for so many years, and in so many theatres on both sides of the Atlantic, has been described so often as feeding his flocks upon the Grampian Hills. The cast of this play, to be found in none of the histories of the American Stage, is here reproduced from a file of bills of the Old Park.

Young Norval	Master Payne.
(His first appearance in public.)	
Old Norval	Mr. Huntington.
Lord Randolph	Mr. Tyler.
Glenalvon	Mr. Rutherford.
Lady Randolph	Mrs. Twaites.
Anna	Miss White.

Mr. Ireland in his 'Annals of the New York Stage,' describes Payne as playing the part with all the skill of a finished artist, combined with the freshness and simplicity of youth; and Mr. Dunlap, who was present at the performance, says, "The applause was very great. Boy-actors were then a novelty, and we have seen none since that equalled Master Payne." The New York daily and weekly journals were exceedingly warm in his praise; and in the letter of a special New York correspondent to a leading Boston paper was the following enthusiastic notice: "In force of genius and taste in *belles lettres*, there are few actors on any stage who can claim any competition with him." During this first engagement he played *Zaphna* in 'Mahomet,' *Octavian* in the 'Mountaineers,' *Selim* in 'Barbarossa,' *Tancred* in 'Tancred and Sigismonda;' and for his benefit, March 15, *Romeo* to the *Juliet* of Mrs. Darley, when, notwithstanding a heavy

snow-storm, the receipts were upward of fourteen hundred dollars—a very large sum for those days.

On April 3, 1809, Payne appeared for the first time in Boston, and as *Young Norval*, at the Federal Street Theatre. He was introduced by a poetical prologue from the pen of his kinsman, Robert Treat Payne. He here appeared for the first time in 'Hamlet,' and his success and popularity were even greater than in New York. Among the enthusiastic critiques of the Boston press a few are worthy of reproduction: "His elocution is remarkable for its purity, and his action and deportment are eminently well suited to the passion he represents." "The house was crowded, and the most brilliant circles that we have for a long time witnessed at the theatre, realized the high expectations which had been raised of the exquisite performance of this favorite child of Thespis."

The favorite child of Thespis played again short engagements in New York in May and September, his receipts averaging five hundred dollars a night. He drew large crowds in Philadelphia, but Baltimore was the scene of his greatest triumphs. Of his success there in October, 1809, Wm. Wood gives a full account in his 'Personal Recollections.' On the occasion of his benefit the receipts reached the extraordinary amount of eleven hundred and sixteen dollars in a house which at ordinary times, at the regular prices, and when filled to its utmost capacity, held but eight hundred. Ridiculous sums, ranging from five to twenty-five dollars, were paid for admission to the theatre, one gentleman giving as much as fifty dollars for a single ticket.

After playing in Philadelphia, Payne made successful tours through the South and North, hailed as the American Juvenile Wonder, and attracting enormous audiences wherever he went. His characters, besides those mentioned above, were *Hastings* in 'Jane Shore,' *Frederick* in 'Lovers' Vows,' *Rolla* in 'Pizarro,' and *Edgar* in 'King Lear.' He is said to have been the first *Hamlet* ever seen on the Albany stage, playing the part there April 5, 1810. On March 1, 1811, he appeared for the last time at the Park Theatre, New York, and, for his own benefit, as *Edgar* to the *King Lear* of George Frederick Cooke. In Boston, in March, 1812, when he was first billed as *Mr. Payne*, and can, perhaps, no longer be considered an Infant Prodigy, he played *Hamlet* and *Tancred* to the *Ophelia* and *Sigismonda* of Mrs. Duff, at that time without question the leading tragic actress of America.

Payne went to England in 1813, but had some difficulty in securing a hearing from the London managers until Benjamin West, then President of the Royal Academy, and other influential Americans in England became interested in him and secured him an engagement at Drury Lane. He appeared there June 4, 1813, as *Young Norval*, and under many difficulties. At the last moment the actress cast for *Lady Randolph* refused to appear, and another was hurriedly secured, with whom he had no chance to rehearse. Indeed, he never even saw his stage mother until he met her on the stage and in the regular business of the play. He was unheralded, and had no preliminary puffing to help him to his success, yet his success was secured, and he was received with great applause. The press notices were very complimentary,

and compared him favorably with Master Betty West, who had not been to the theatre since Garrick's day, openly declared that the young American Roscius far exceeded his expectations ; that he thought his acting extremely graceful, and his voice very fine.

Payne subsequently performed in Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, and Dublin, everywhere drawing crowded houses. In Ireland he was associated with the great Miss O'Neill, playing *Petruchio* to her *Katherine*, at Cork and elsewhere in the Irish provinces.

In Paris, Payne met and formed an intimacy with Talma, which lasted as long as Talma lived ; and there he first turned his attention to dramatic literature, translating from the French the popular play of the 'Maid and the Magpie,' which he sold to the managers of Covent Garden for one hundred and fifty pounds. This opened to him a new field of labor, and his connection with the stage thereafter was that of poet rather than player, although he occasionally acted in the English provinces.

Payne was the author, translator and adapter of more than sixty plays, a list of which will show the variety of his subjects, and perhaps the versatility of his genius :

TRAGEDIES.—‘Brutus ;’ ‘Virginia ;’ ‘Oswali of Athens ;’ ‘Richelieu, or The Broken Heart ;’ ‘Mahomet ;’ ‘Italian Bride.’

COMEDIES.—‘Charles the Second ;’ ‘Procrastination ;’ ‘Married and Single ;’ ‘Plots at Home ;’ ‘Woman’s Revenge ;’ ‘All for the Best ;’ ‘Borrower ;’ ‘Last Duel in Spain ;’ ‘Two Sons-in-Law.’

DRAMAS.—‘Spanish Husband ;’ ‘Therese, the Orphan of Geneva ;’ ‘Norah, the Girl of Erin ;’ ‘Adeline, or Seduction ;’ ‘Two Galley Slaves ;’ ‘Rival Monarchs ;’ ‘Paoli ;’ ‘Solitary of Mount Savage ;’ ‘Ali Pasha ;’ ‘Inseparables ;’ ‘Maid and Magpie ;’ ‘Accusation ;’ ‘Guilty Mother ;’ ‘Man of the Black Forest ;’ ‘Madame DuBarri ;’ ‘Festival of St. Mark ;’ ‘Bridge of Kehl ;’ ‘Judge and the Attorneys ;’ ‘Mill of the Lake ;’ ‘Mazeppa ;’ ‘Novido the Neapolitan ;’ ‘Fall of Algiers ;’ ‘Miller’s Man ;’ ‘Duel ;’ ‘Jaconda.’

OPERAS.—‘Clari, the Maid of Milan ;’ ‘White Maid ;’ ‘Tyrolese Peasants ;’ ‘Visitandines ;’ ‘England’s Good Old Days.’

FARCES.—‘Fricandeau, or the Coronet and the Cook ;’ ‘Post Chaise ;’ ‘Twas I ;’ ‘Mrs. Smith ;’ ‘Love in Humble Life ;’ ‘Lancers ;’ ‘Grandpapa ;’ ‘Peter Smink ;’ ‘Not Invited ;’ ‘Boarding School.’

Of these only ‘Brutus, or The Fall of Tarquin,’ the best of his productions, holds the stage to-day ; and even ‘Brutus,’ strong and full of human interest as it is, has rarely been seen of late years. It was written in London in 1818, and was suggested by Nat Lee’s ‘Lucius Junius Brutus,’ although it is entirely different from that play. Payne conceived and wrote the titular part for Edmund Kean, intending, in the beginning, to play *Titus* himself ; but Stephen Kemble, manager of Drury Lane Theatre, where it was first produced in December, 1818, expressed himself as shocked at the impropriety, and even indelicacy, of any actor appearing in a play of which he was the author !

‘Brutus’ had an unprecedented run of over fifty consecutive nights, doing much to restore the failing

fortunes of the theatre, and to revive the popular interest in Kean, whose attractiveness was on the wane.

In America *Brutus* was in its day a favorite character of Cooper, Forrest, the younger Booth, and of other tragedians. Its first American production was at the Park Theatre, New York, March 15, 1819, with Mr. Pritchard as the Roman Father. The elder Booth also was fond of the part, and Payne himself is said to have witnessed a performance of the tragedy in Washington, in 1850, with Booth as *Brutus*, and Edwin Booth, then a lad of seventeen, as *Titus*; a remarkable combination of talent before and behind the footlights.

Payne returned to America in 1832. In New York he was tendered a banquet at the City Hotel, and on Nov. 29 of that year, at the Park Theatre, he received the first complimentary benefit ever offered to any actor by the citizens of New York. A large and influential committee organized the testimonial, and the prices of admission were raised to one dollar for gallery, and five for boxes and pit.

Forrest played *Brutus* to the *Titus* of John R. Scott; Charles Kemble, *Petruchio* to the *Katherine* of his daughter, Fanny Kemble; and George Barrett, Wallack, Richings, and Mrs. Sharpe appeared in Payne's comedy of 'Charles the Second.' Payne himself was not in the cast, his career as an actor in America having virtually ended when he went to Europe nineteen years before.

On April 3, 1833, he received a complimentary benefit at the Tremont Theatre, Boston; and another at the Camp Street Theatre, New Orleans, March 13, 1835. In 1843 Payne went to Tunis as American

Consul, and held the position until the autumn of 1845. In 1851 he was re-appointed, and died at his post there on April 9, 1852. Through the friendly offices of W. W. Corcoran, his remains were carried to America in the month of March, 1883, and finally deposited in Oak Hill Cemetery, Washington, D. C.

LAURENCE HUTTON.

Among the foremost is John Howard Payne, the American Roscius, who was signalized for his *Norval* and his playing *Edgar* to Cooke's *Lear*. As an author, Payne's 'Brutus' and his 'Home, Sweet Home' have secured him a world-wide renown. I became acquainted with him as the editor of the *Thespian Mirror*, when he was about thirteen years of age. A more engaging youth could not be imagined; he won all hearts by the beauty of his person and his captivating address, the premature richness of his mind and his chaste and flowing utterances.

DR. J. W. FRANCIS: 'Old New York,' p. 213.

Payne was an example of precocious talent, the like of which I doubt whether this country has produced, and the object of an admiration such as I have never known to be bestowed on any other young person. Young Payne was a perfect Cupid in his beauty, and his sweet voice, self-possessed yet modest manners, wit, vivacity and premature wisdom, made him a most engaging prodigy.

Saturday Evening Gazette, Boston, May 1, 1852.

Payne played only two nights; on the 8th [Sept. 1809] *Hamlet*, and on the 11th *Octavian* in the 'Mountain-eers.' His uncommon beauty, and his modest air won for him the admiration of all. His form was slight, and not capable of great physical exertion ; his features were round and smooth, evidencing juvenility ; and his vocal organs were only partially developed. All these were obstacles to astonishing effects in those characters requiring a powerful frame and marked features ; but although they militated against successful personation in scenes of turbulent passions, his few defects were counterbalanced by a soundness of judgment that would have done credit to experienced actors, and by the tenderness and pathos with which he delivered affecting passages.

CHARLES BLAKE : 'Providence Stage,' *chap. 4, p. 73.*

During Payne's residence in London he had become acquainted with Charles Lamb, who kept up a correspondence with him for some years. The two characteristic letters given here—so far as I am aware—have never been hitherto published in this country. They were indited by Lamb in reference to a couple of melodramas, entitled respectively 'Ali Pacha' and the 'Two Galley Slaves,' written by Payne. They are as follows :

1822, Thursday.

'Ali Pacha' will do. I sent my sister the first night, not having been able to go myself, and her report of its effect was most favorable. I saw it last night—the third night—and it was most satisfactorily received. I have been sadly disappointed in Talfourd, who does the critiques in the *Times*, and who promised his strenuous services ; but, by some damn'd arrangement he was sent to the wrong house, and a most iniquitous account of 'Ali'

substituted for his, which, I am sure, would have been a kind one. The *Morning Herald* did it ample justice, without appearing to puff it. It is an abominable misrepresentation of the *Times* that Farren played *Ali* like *Lord Ogilby*. He acted infirmity of body, but not of voice or purpose. His manner was even grand. A grand old gentleman. His falling to the earth when his son's death was announced was as fine as anything I ever saw. It was as if he had been blasted. Miss Foote looked helpless and beautiful, and greatly helped the piece. It is going *on steadily*, I am sure, *for many nights*. Marry ! I was a little disappointed with *Hassan*, who tells us he subsists by cracking court jests before *Ali*, but he made none. In all the rest, scenery and machinery, it was faultless. I hope it will bring you here. I should be most glad of that. I have a room for you, and you shall order your own dinner three days in the week. I must retain my own authority for the rest. As far as magazines go, I can answer for Talfourd in the *New Monthly*. He cannot be put out there. But it is established as a favorite, and can do without these expletives. I long to talk over with you the Shakspere Picture. My doubts of its being a forgery mainly rest upon the goodness of the picture. The bellows might be trumped up, but where did the painter spring from ? Is Ireland a consummate artist, or any of Ireland's accomplices ? But we shall confer upon it, I hope. The *New Times*, I understand, was favorable to *Ali*, but I have not seen it. I am sensible of the want of method in this letter, but I have been deprived of the connecting organ by a practice I have fallen into since I left Paris of taking too much strong spirits of a night. I must return to the Hotel de l'Europe, and Macon.

How is Kenny? Have you seen my friend White? What is Poole about? &c. Do not write, but come and answer me.

The weather is charming, and there is a mermaid to be seen in London. You may not have the opportunity of inspecting such a *Poisarde* once again in ten centuries.

My sister joins me in the hope of seeing you.

Yours truly,

C. LAMB.

W. C. MILLER : in the *Theatre*, Oct. 1885.

Mary Lamb has begged me to give her a day or two. She comes to Paris this evening and stays here a week. Her only male friend is a Mr. Payne, whom she praises exceedingly for his kindness and attention to Charles. He is the author of 'Brutus,' and has a good face.

HENRY CRABB ROBINSON : 'Reminiscences,' *vol. i.*,
Aug. 20, 1822.

It is in this opera ['Clari'] that Mr. Payne introduced his immortal song of 'Home, Sweet Home.' This song has had a more universal circulation than any other song written before or since. It is a fact that upwards of one hundred thousand copies were issued by its publisher in London in less than one year after its first publication. The profit yielded over two thousand guineas. . . . There have been many ridiculous statements made as to the circumstances under which Mr. Payne wrote the words of his celebrated song. Some have stated that he was residing in London at the time without a shilling in his pocket ; others have stated that, "on one stormy night, beneath the dim flickering of a London street lamp, gaunt and hungry, and without a place to shelter his poor shivering body, he wrote his inspired song upon a piece of ragged paper picked up from the sidewalk." This was not so. . . . We see, by his acknowledgment to Bishop of the receipt of eighty pounds, that he was comfortably situated when preparing 'Clari' for the stage. . . . As at one time it was stated that Mr. Payne did not write the words of 'Home, Sweet Home,' the assertion called forth inquiry. Washington Irving was applied to on the

subject, and his reply was, that he "had been unable to discover who else did, and he could see no reason for doubting the authorship."

GABRIEL HARRISON: 'Life of Payne,' *chap. iv.*, pp. 106-7, 109-10.

The late Robert William Elliston (when will that rich book, 'Ellistoniana,' be published?) was at one period of his curious life, manager of two—we believe the Manchester and Birmingham—theatres. Being in London, he was, as a matter of course, beating up for recruits. To get the best actors at the smallest possible sums, was the supreme object of his wishes. He bargained—failed—succeeded—and underwent all the chances of a collector of rarities. Among other persons, he encountered Payne. He was overjoyed to see him. To inquire into his health, to state his own exigencies, and to give him a pressing invitation to Manchester, was the work of a moment. "My dear fellow, come down to us! see us! hear us! mark us! observe—a—how we '*do* the thing' at our good theatre of Manchester—ha, ha!" Payne answered and said, that having nothing to do, he would very willingly run down to his country theatre, but protested against playing himself. "I have forgotten all my old characters now," said he, "so that playing is out of the question. However, I shall be happy to come down and see you." The manager reiterated his pressing invitations, and Payne accordingly "ran down" to Manchester. Arriving at night, he beheld Elliston in his glory. He was the first man of the place. He managed, acted, directed, corrected everybody. His theatre was the best theatre in the universe, and he

was the best man in it. On the morning following, there was a rehearsal of ‘Richard the Third.’ Elliston (among other sins) at that time used to murder our third *Richard*. This morning however, (“being busy,” as he said,) he invited Payne to rehearse for him. “Perhaps you will *play Richard* too?” said he, in that drawling, chuckling tone of comedy, which so much became him. Payne assured him that this was totally out of the question ; but that, as he (Elliston) was busy, he would try, with the prompter’s help—who was requested to be loud enough—to blunder through the mere rehearsal. He began —

To-day the winter of our discontent
Is made—made—

The prompter came in — “Is made new summer” —

Is made new summer by the sun of York ;
And all the storms that lour’d upon our house,
Are — gone — vanished — hidden — what is it ?

The true prompter came in again, and again, and again ; but to no good purpose. The head of the American Roscius held many clever things, but unluckily the part of *Richard III.* was not among them. He therefore resolved to put an end to the absurdity, and turned round to address Elliston with — “ You see it is utterly hopeless for me ” — when he found that the manager was not there. He had gone, with a promise to return directly. Under these circumstances, poor Payne toiled through the play, and at the conclusion, seeing Elliston at his elbow once more, he addressed him with, “ You perceive how utterly ridiculous it would have been, had I accepted your invitation to *play* the part. I have not been able to

remember three consecutive lines!" The manager's face expanded ; he swore that he was horribly amazed. "My dear fellow, you are not in earnest? I'm *sure* you are not. You are all over the town by this time, — in large letters — '*For this night only, the part of RICHARD by THE CELEBRATED AMERICAN ROSCIUS, MR. JOHN HOWARD PAYNE.*' You *must* play for us to-night." "It is totally impossible," replied Payne, angrily ; "I cannot, and will not expose myself. What could possess you to do this, when you saw — ?" "My dear fellow, I saw you going on with the part, as I thought excellently — swimmingly — triumphantly. Come, come ! the thing is done : 'tis too late to undo it ; play you *must* — nay, you *shall*. What ! not oblige an old *friend* — an old *admirer* ?" etc., etc. What could be done ? men haven't hearts of stone ! The exigency was great, and Payne consented. "And how did you get through the part ?" said we to him, when he had told the story. "Why really better than I could have imagined. I studied all day, and at night gave as much of the part as I could recollect." "But when you could not recollect ?" persisted we. "Why," said he, "I spouted something *like* Shakspere (!) and, to tell you the truth, the people seemed to think my imitation better than the original ; for I roared it out twice as loud as the legitimate text, and it drew down thunders of applause."

BARRY CORNWALL : 'Life of Kean,' chap. 4.

Payne was in my father's counting-room early in the present century. About 1833, some personal friends of his, headed by myself, undertook to fill his pocket and his heart, by getting up a benefit in the

Tremont Theatre, Boston. Great were the preparations, and glowing were the posters. The tickets were set at \$5 (more or less); professionals who had long been retired volunteered their services; and everything was done that inexperience on the part of the committee could suggest to make the benefit a failure! But we thought we were doing precisely the right thing, and asked nobody's advice. John Gilbert (if my memory serves me) and his wife were among the players.

The eventful night came. In the second row appeared the committee and their families and friends *en grande tenue*, modestly giving up the dress-circle to "the sovereign people," who were expected by thousands. In the lower part of the house appeared about 200 editors, critics, and boys eating peanuts. Finally the curtain rose, and four short plays were enacted, almost in pantomime, as no sane man could be expected to say much before so much light and so few persons. After all was done, the curtain fell, and some one possessed of a devil cried out for Payne. Some one else ran over the way to the Tremont House and brought the unfortunate man before the unfortunate committee, and obliged him to thank the handful of friends for the benefit—which was forever after known as the Festival of Pain.

R. B. FORBES, in the *Critic*, Dec. 30, 1882.

How much of Payne's success on the stage was due to his absolute merits as an actor, and how much to the curiosity he excited as a precocious lad, doing, or attempting to do, work that only the most finished and mature of tragedians had ever undertaken before

in America, it is, of course, difficult now to determine. He certainly was associated, and in equal parts, with some of the most distinguished men and women in his profession, and with them he shared the honors and the applause. It must be confessed, however, that he did not grow in popularity as he grew in years, and that his later engagements were less successful, in a pecuniary way, than those of his youth. He seems to have become careless and indifferent, to have devoted less time to study and preparation, and it is believed that he was dissatisfied with the profession, and with his position in it, even before he went abroad in 1813.

LAURENCE HUTTON : in the *Magazine of American History*, May. 1883.

JAMES WILLIAM WALLACK.

1795—1864.

Now Wallack rises on the backward gaze,
The city's pride in still-remembered days.
The honored head of an illustrious line,
His part it was the Drama to refine.
He left the arms of Nature richly graced,
And wooed his art with spirit and with taste.
Stage heroes gained from him an added light,
And Shakspere's *Benedick* was his by right.
These in his prime ; in later life he knew
Erasmus Bookworm and the vengeful *Jew*.
But not his art alone the public moved,
The man as well as actor was beloved ;
And Wallack's name is truly one of those
That well deserves the best that fame bestows.

WILLIAM L. KEESE.



JAMES WILLIAM WALLACK
As Mercutio in "Romeo and Juliet."

JAMES WILLIAM WALLACK.

James William Wallack was born at Hercules Buildings, Lambeth, London, Aug. 24, 1795. He came of a theatrical stock. His father, William Wallack, was an actor at Astley's Amphitheatre, and was esteemed for merit in the playing of maritime parts. His mother, also connected with Astley's Amphitheatre, was an actress of uncommon talent and popularity. This lady was a widow, named Field, when William Wallack married her, and she had a daughter who became "Mrs. Jones" and under that name was popular on the stage of the London Haymarket, and subsequently in Boston and New York. Mrs. Jones acted at the old Park Theatre, New York, in 1805, and she died in that city, Nov. 11, 1806, aged 24. William Wallack and his wife had four children—Henry-John, James W., Mary, and Elizabeth. Henry, the eldest, born in London in 1790, had a long career on the English and American stage, was especially distinguished for his excellent performance of *Squire Broadlands* in the 'Country Squire' or 'Old English Gentleman,' and died in New York, Aug. 30, 1870. Mary was an actress of heavy parts and was known on the London stage as "Mrs. Stanley." She came to America and appeared at the Chatham Theatre, New York, June 11, 1827, under the name of "Mrs. Hill."

Subsequently she married a rich planter and went into the South. She died at New Orleans in 1834. Elizabeth became Mrs. Pincott, and was the mother of the late Mrs. Alfred Wigan. Henry was the father of J. W. Wallack, Jr., (1818-1873), with kindly admiration generally called "Jim Wallack," long distinguished and popular on the American stage, by reason of his fine performances of *James V.* in the 'King of the Commons,' the *Man-in-the-Iron Mask*, *Werner*, *Fagin*, and *Henry Dunbar*. Henry was also the father of Julia Wallack, who became Mrs. W. Hoskin, and who acted in London as Miss Julia Harland, and of Fanny Wallack, who became Mrs. Moorhouse, was leading lady at the Broadway Theatre, New York, in 1847-48, and died on Oct. 12, 1856, at Edinburgh. The date of the birth of James William Wallack has been erroneously stated 1794, in two at least of the accepted American records. The sketch of his life published by Mr. T. H. Morrell, N. Y., 1865, says 1795, and the inscription on his grave-stone, in Greenwood Cemetery, says that he died on Dec. 25, 1864, "aged 69." It has been stated, also, that his birth was precipitated by the excitement attendant on the burning of Astley's Amphitheatre; but this theatre was burnt down on Sept. 17, 1794, and the boy had arrived on the previous 24th of August, granting he was born in that year. Astley's, long a popular London Institution, was built by Philip Astley, and was opened in 1773.

Wallack was intended by his parents for the Navy, and at an early age the berth of midshipman was obtained for him; but he preferred to follow in his father's path and be an actor, and so, in compliance

with the boy's wish, he was sent to the "Academic Theatre," an institution established by Queen Charlotte, in Leicester Square, London, for performances by English and German children. His first appearance on the stage had already been made, at the age of four: he was taken on in the spectacle of 'Black Beard' at the Royal Circus, afterward the Surrey Theatre, London. When about twelve years old he is said to have attracted the favorable notice of Sheridan, at one of the juvenile performances at the Academic Theatre, and thus to have obtained an engagement at Drury Lane, where he remained for nearly two years—till that house was burnt down, Feb. 24, 1809. He then went into Ireland—he was engaged, for low comedy, at the Royal Hibernian Theatre, in Peter Street, Dublin, in 1810, under the management of Henry Erskine Johnston—but came back to Drury Lane when it was rebuilt and re-opened, Oct. 12, 1812 (rebuilt by Wyatt and re-opened with the well-known prologue by Lord Byron), and with that theatre his fortunes were associated until he visited America in 1818. Edmund Kean's memorable first success in *Shylock*—the starting point of his career—was made at Drury Lane, Jan. 26, 1814, and during the subsequent season young Wallack acted with that wonderful genius, and had the privilege to see him in all the parts that he played. Elliston also acted there (but did not become lessee of the theatre until Oct. 3, 1819), and with him likewise young Wallack was professionally associated. His talents and his winning character gained the especial friendship of Elliston, and he likewise attracted the favorable regard of Lord Byron, who, for about a year,

was a member of a committee for the management of Drury Lane Theatre. All readers know this, yet the record of it is appropriate here. The other members of that committee were Douglas Kinnaird, William Whitbread, C. Bradshaw, Mr. Cavendish, Lord Essex, and Peter Moore. Messrs. Rae and Dibdin were managers and Mr. Ward was secretary. Whitbread died on July 6, 1815. Byron held this post of committee-man from early summer of 1815 till spring of 1816. His final departure from England was made on April 25, 1816.

Wallack's rare faculties for acting were educated in a thorough school and in storied and stirring theatrical times. It was his good fortune to know and converse with men who had seen Garrick and Spranger Barry, and also personally to see the acting of Kean and Kemble, Mrs. Siddons, John Bannister, Elliston, Munden, Betty, Mathews, Cooke, Fawcett, Incledon, and many other worthies of the British Theatre in the sterling old times. From influences thus potent and invigorating he could not, and he did not, fail to derive a strong impulse in the art that he had chosen. He remained upon the stage for more than half a century (his last performance, that of *Benedick*, in 'Much Ado About Nothing,' was given in New York, at his own theatre, on May 14, 1859), and to the last he maintained the courtly and galliard spirit and manners of that gay and easy-going period of London social history in which his youth had been cast and his character formed.

Among the comedians who graced the London stage in the first years of the nineteenth century was John Johnstone, an Irishman, and an excellent and popular actor of Irish characters. This gentleman was the

son of an officer of the British army, retired from the service and established in the romantic county Wicklow, Ireland. Here "Jack" Johnstone was born, and here in his youth he was educated to be a soldier. But his tastes and desires took a more pacific turn ; he presently discovered the possession of a fine voice for singing ; and, at last, discarding the pursuit of arms, he appeared at the Crow Street Theatre, Dublin, as *Captain Macheath*, in the 'Beggar's Opera,' was successful, and so became an actor.

For this avocation he possessed uncommon advantages. His figure was above the middle size ; his face was handsome, and it was winningly indicative of buoyant and sparkling humor ; and his versatile mimetic talent had that wide range of faculty which enabled him to present, equally well, the refined Irish gentleman and the unsophisticated but shrewd and waggish Irish peasant. His manners were frank, cordial and agreeable. His singing was delicious. He could impersonate, with adequate skill, such opposite and contrasted characters as *Sir Lucius O'Trigger* and *Dennis Brulgrudderry*. He was the original representative of *Inkle*, in Colman's operatic comedy of 'Inkle and Yarico.' Among the characters in which he was reputed to be above rivalry were *Major O'Flaherty*, *Paddy O'Rafferty*, and *Teague*. He sang the melody of 'Savourneen Deelish' with the sweetness of the nightingale. No singing comedian of the time could compare with him ; and it was only by Incledon (1764-1826) that his supremacy in this line was disturbed. Jack Johnstone had a career in London of forty-one years — a favorite on the stage, and, during the wild days of the Regency, a favorite in the circle of the Prince's

companions. His residence was in Covent Garden, over against the Market, and for this place his partiality was great : he was often heard to say that the cabbages gave a sweet and wholesome odor to the morning air in that region. He was a thrifty man, and he saved a large sum of money, so that, on his daughter's wedding day, he (according to Walter Donaldson's 'Recollections,' p. 30), was able to give to her a dowry of £20,000. That daughter married James William Wallack, in 1817, and of that union John Lester Wallack was the first child. He was born in New York, on Jan. 1, 1820. His mother died in 1851.

The elder Wallack made his first appearance in America on Sept. 7, 1818, at the old Park Theatre, under the management of Edmund Simpson, who had just returned from England where he had engaged a remarkable phalanx of stock actors and of stars. Wallack was then only 24 years old,—in the prime of manly beauty and grace, and in all the ardor of youthful enthusiasm concerning his art. He enacted *Macbeth*, and he subsequently appeared as *Rolla*, *Romeo*, *Hamlet*, and *Richard III*. His talents, in each of these great parts, were brilliantly displayed, and the play-goers of the town were thereupon excited to a condition of uncommon interest in his proceedings and his welfare. He remained in America for two years, and visited many cities, and he was seen with admiration in many characters. His range was indeed remarkable,—for at this time he acted, in addition to the parts above named, *Octavian* in the 'Mountaineers,' *Bertram*, *Richard the Second*, *Don Felix* in the 'Wonder,' *Martin Heywood* in the 'Rent Day,' *Massaroni* in the

'Brigand,' *Don Cæsar de Bazan*, and *Hamlet*. A glimpse of his personal appearance at this time is obtained in 'Notes and Comments on Shakspere,' by the veteran comedian James H. Hackett, the famous *Falstaff* of the dramatic period lately ended—the third quarter of this century : "His figure and bearing on or off the stage was very *distingué*: his eye was sparkling; his hair dark, curly, and luxuriant; his facial features finely chiselled; and, together with the natural conformation of his head, throat, and chest, Mr. Wallack presented a remarkable specimen of manly beauty."

After a single season at home Wallack, in 1822, again visited America, and this time he met with a serious and painful misfortune. Those were the days of stage-coaches, and in making the journey from New York to Philadelphia he was in a coach that was overturned and smashed, and he suffered the fracture of one of his legs. This accident laid him up for eighteen months, and always after that time he was lame. He acted in New York two years later, and then returned to England and was employed as stage manager at Drury Lane, under Elliston's direction. In 1827 he acted again with Edmund Kean, in '*Othello*.' He was an active worker in the farewell benefit performance for the famous clown Grimaldi, which occurred at Drury Lane June 28, 1828, and at the close of that season he was honored with a tribute of silver plate from his brother actors, presented, with a public speech, by the elder Mathews. In this year he again visited America, bringing over "the favorite actress Mrs. Barnes;" and for his services at the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, in November of

that year he received \$200 a night—which at that time was deemed a very considerable compensation. Forrest was acting at the Walnut, and Cooper at the Chestnut, at the same time.

Miss Mary Russell Mitford's tragedy of 'Rienzi' was produced at the Park Theatre, New York, Jan. 7, 1829, and Wallack played *Rienzi*. "In characters of an heroic or romantic cast," said a contemporary review, "when the moral feelings of the audience are enlisted on his side, there is no man like him." He continued to cross and recross the Atlantic, appearing in both England and America, for a considerable time. At one period,—from Sept. 4, 1837, till Sept. 23, 1839, when it was burnt down,—he managed "the National Theatre," in New York. It stood at the corner of Church and Leonard Streets. This was the first "Wallack's," but it did not bear the name. It was in this house that N. P. Willis's play of 'Tortesa, the Usurer,' was first produced, April 8, 1839. Charles Kean was to have acted in the National, on the night that proved its last, as *Richard III*. Wallack then went to Niblo's Garden with his company, and maintained himself there for a short season. He was stage manager at the Princess's, London, in 1843, and he there made a signal hit as *Don Cesar de Bazan*. It was not until about 1851 that he finally settled in New York, and made that city his permanent home. His opportunity of founding a theatre came in the wreck of Brougham's Lyceum, started by John Brougham, which went to pieces after a short and unsuccessful career, extending from Dec. 23, 1850, to March 17, 1852. Wallack then took the place, and made it a substantial and prosperous theatre. His

last appearance in England was made in 1851, at the Haymarket, as *St. Pierre*, in the play of the 'Wife.'

"Wallack's Theatre," near to the southwest corner of Broadway and Broome Street, New York, was opened on Sept. 8, 1852, with Morton's comedy of the 'Way to Get Married.' Mr. Lester Wallack played *Tangent*, and he was also the stage manager of the new theatre. The company comprised J. W. Wallack, Lester Wallack, W. R. Blake, Charles Walcot, John Brougham, C. K. Mason, Charles Hale, F. Chippendale, Malvina Pray (afterwards Mrs. W. J. Florence), Miss J. Gould, Mrs. Stephens, Mrs. C. Hale, Mrs. Brougham, Mrs. Cramer, and, at first, Miss Laura Keene,—who, however, soon seceded and set up a theatre of her own. The Broome Street house continued to be "Wallack's" till 1861, when, on the 25th of September, the scene was shifted to the building, afterwards called the Star Theatre, at the northeast corner of Broadway and 13th Street. This house was opened with Tom Taylor's play of the 'New President.' On January 4, 1882, Wallack's Theatre was opened on the northeast corner of Broadway and 30th Street, but, in the meanwhile, its founder had died, and the property had devolved upon his son. The elder Wallack passed away on Christmas Day, 1864, dying in the house, No. 210 East 14th Street, New York. Wallack's Theatre, first and last, has been the scene of comedy performances of exceptional brilliancy, and almost every renowned dramatic name of the last thirty years has been, directly or indirectly, associated with its history.

Wallack acted in tragedy, comedy and melodrama, and he was admired in all. But he particularly shone

in comedy. His distinguishing characteristic in this field was the easy, graceful, sparkling, winning brilliancy with which he executed his artistic designs. An actor shows the depth and quality of his individual nature in his ideals; but here he stands upon the same ground with all other intellectual persons who are students of human nature and of life. It is in the methods by which he expresses and presents his ideals that he shows his distinctive power, ability, and resources in the dramatic art; and here he stands upon ground that is his own. Wallack's ideals might be made the theme of controversy. Hackett, for example, thought that his *Hamlet* "lacked a sufficiency of weight in the philosophical portions, and also of depth and intensity of meditation in the soliloquies." But nobody could doubt or dispute the clearly defined purpose, or the pervasive animation, or the affluent, copious, picturesque grace and variety of execution with which his artistic purpose was fulfilled. His presence, whether in repose or motion, quickly absorbed a spectator's interest and held it, charmed and delighted, as long as he remained on the scene. His person, not above the middle height, was symmetrical and fine. His demeanor was marked by natural dignity and by many engaging little personal peculiarities. His voice was rich, sweet and clear, and his articulation distinct, and when he spoke under strong excitement — as in some portions of *Rolla* — his sonorous tones flowed over the action in a veritable silver torrent of musical sound. In acting, though he possessed the quality of repose, he was fond of rapid movement. He was everywhere at once, in such a part as *Benedick* or *Don Felix*, and he filled the scene

with pictorial vitality and dazzled the observer with the opulence of his enjoyment. He was alive to the tips of his fingers, and he was entirely in earnest. As a comedian his style undoubtedly reflected that of Robert William Elliston—the magnificent, the overwhelming—as we may still see him in the speaking pages of Charles Lamb ; yet he had a way of his own, and certainly he wrote his name, broad and deep and in letters of gold, across the dramatic period through which he lived. His range of parts was extensive. He acted *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Rolla*, *Octavian*, *Richard III.*, *Don Felix*, *Shylock*, *Richard the Second*, *Coriolanus*, *Benedick*, *Martin Heywood*, *Massaroni*, *Don Cæsar de Bazan*, *Doricourt*, *Dick Dashall*, *Rienzi*, *Master Walter*, *St. Pierre*, *Tortesa*, *Jacques*, *Rover*, *Sir Edward Mortimer*, *Delmar the Veteran*, *Reuben Glenroy*, and many other characters. Sheridan Knowles, who saw him as *Master Walter*, acting with the renowned Charlotte Cushman as *Julia*, declared him to be the best representative of this part that he had ever seen ; and added, with Celtic fervor and excess, “I never understood the character before.” In romantic tone, rich and various color, and the delicious effervescence of animal spirits he probably was seen at his best as *Don Felix*, *Don Cæsar*, *Benedick*, *Rover*, and the pictorial brigand *Massaroni*. But his peculiar, earnest, passionate touch of serious feeling — as in *Rolla*’s dying speech to *Cora*, the pathetic scorn of *St. Pierre*, the settled gloom of the *Stranger*, and the romantic sad reserve of *Reuben Glenroy*—was penetrating and tenderly impressive. He rejoiced in quick transitions and theatrical surprises. When, for example, he re-appeared in New York after the accident that made him lame for life,

he hobbled forth on crutches, as gouty old *Captain Bertram* in 'Fraternal Discord'—a play adapted by William Dunlap, from the German of Kotzebue, and one in which, as *Bertram* and *Bowline*, Hodgkinson and Jefferson 2d had been famous—and his audience was thereupon grievously afflicted with the idea that their favorite had become a permanent cripple. But in the after-piece, 'My Aunt,' he astonished and delighted them by bounding upon the stage as *Dick Dashall*, buoyant with the elasticity of youth. Wallack was so essentially a dramatic person that almost every scene in which he participated, whether off the stage or on, seemed to derive from him a theatrical atmosphere and to become picturesque. In manner and in way of life he was the formal English gentleman. His image, at the last, is that of a slight, erect, agile figure, clad in black, the face very pale, the features sharply defined and handsome, the eyes large, dark and brilliant, the hair abundant and as white as snow, the head and carriage intellectual and stately, the smile ready and sweet, and the whole demeanor placid and charming with natural and perfect refinement. He was courteous to everybody, but kindness itself to those he loved. Time had not destroyed in the man the affectionate heart and the simple trustfulness of the child. The labors and the laurels of threescore years and ten rested lightly on his honored head, and he went to his grave in blessings: nor have the tears dried yet with which he was mourned.

WILLIAM WINTER.

Apart from Shakspere, Macready's most important part was *Werner*, which was matched, however, by the *Ulric* of James Wallack, a master of his craft, whose essential quality of manliness was embellished with every accomplishment that can grace an actor. He was unapproachable in Romantic Drama, although his laurels were hotly contested by Osbaldistone at the Surrey, Cobham at the Coburg, Campbell at Sadler's Wells, Freer at the Pavilion, Elton at the Garrick, and the great Napoleon Gomersal at Astley's. The wreath was placed on the brow of James Wallack, the *Brigand Chief*, who reigned at Drury Lane. This dashing actor gave great effect to short parts of vital importance, coming on the scene at the critical moment, like Blucher at Waterloo, to clinch the glory of the day.

For example, *Richmond* may be rendered amiably by a modest walking gentleman, whose virtue alone guarantees victory; but when Wallack, wonderfully armed, appeared, his grand head set magnificently on his shoulders, and stood in the centre of the stage, like Ajax or Achilles! it was clear that *Gloucester*, though glorified by Edmund Kean, was a gone coon, and it was some considerable time before the shouts of the audience, who applauded to a man, and, I may add, to a woman, sufficiently subsided to allow him to "walk into the bowels of the land."

WALTER LACY: 'The Green Room,' Christmas, 1880.

It was some time before I again performed *Beatrice*, and then I had for my *Benedick* Mr. James Wallack. He was by that time past the meridian of his life; but

he threw a spirit and grace into the part, which, added to his fine figure and gallant bearing made him next to Mr. Charles Kemble, although far beneath him, the best *Benedick* whom I had ever seen. Oh for something of the fire, the undying youthfulness of spirit, now so rare, the fine courtesy of bearing, which made the acting with actors of this type so delightful.

HELEN FAUCIT (Lady Martin): 'On Some of Shakspere's Female Characters,' p. 375.

Mr. Wallack's *Benedick* was one of the best, if not the very best, the American stage has ever known. Between his *Benedick* and his *Shylock*, so totally different, but both so admirable in his hands, his critics were never able to show even the most shallow spirit of judgment. His *Benedick* was inimitable, his *Shylock* perfection, and which was the better no doctor could decide. He played *Shylock* for the last time on Jan. 15, 1859, at the old theatre, Broadway and Broome Street. Mrs. Hoey was the *Portia*, and his son, Mr. Lester Wallack, played *Bassanio*. On May 14 in the same year he played *Benedick*, and was never seen in character on the stage again.

LAURENCE HUTTON: 'Plays and Players,' chap. 29, p. 246.

As prominent in this long catalogue James Wallack might be permitted to stand first, as a tragedian of powers, and as a comic performer of remarkable capabilities. His Shakspearean range and his *Dick Dashall* are enough for present citation.

DR. J. W. FRANCIS: 'Old New York,' p. 214.

Five distinct and strongly marked characters—*Rolla*, *Martin Heywood* in the ‘Rent Day;’ *Alessandro Massaroni* in the ‘Brigand;’ *Don Cæsar de Bazan*, and *Dick Dashall* in the farce of ‘My Aunt’—found in that gentleman a presentation of character that left nothing wanting on the score of life-like portraiture and picturesque effect. That rare combination, fine person, handsome features, distinguished manners, and thorough dramatic training based on intellectual culture was the pedestal on which the elder Wallack stood, a statuesque representative of the expressed and admirable in form and feature—of what Charles Dickens termed “the romantic school of acting.”

JAMES E. MURDOCK: ‘The Stage,’ chap. II, pp. 220
—21.

The ‘Rent Day,’ as performed at this house [Park Theatre], which the author, Mr. Douglas Jerrold, well entitles, “a domestic drama,” has made a powerful impression on the public. We feel safe in recommending every one to see it. No piece has ever been produced in this city with a stronger cast; it could scarcely be better played anywhere. Wallack is, in truth, a fine, bold, dashing fellow—full of glowing spirit, not profound, but graceful and beautiful, and with a face and person that bode “mischief sweet” to the dress circles, (if the boxes, whose front seats are so often filled with ladies in leghorn flats or dunstables; and gentlemen, with Leary’s latest beavers over their left eyes, may be dignified with such a title). His *Martin Heywood* is a masterpiece; a picture, from beginning to end. No one who has seen it will forget it. It is full of manly English feeling and natural

interest, and he richly merited the repeated and heavy peals of applause which recognized each picturesque attitude and touching feature in this truly fine representation of the sturdy, noble farmer, struggling between hope and anguish, despair and pride. As *Rattle*, he is gentlemanly and elegant; and as the stanch old sailor, in the 'Adopted Child,' kept a densely crowded audience attentively delighted, the other evening at his benefit, till one. He was called out, and made a brief, neat address. In this line he has no competitor.

New York Mirror, Sept. 22, 1832.

Mr. Wallack was a rhetorician, an actor. He read beautifully, he threw himself into graceful attitudes, he convinced you that he was an accomplished scholar and a gentleman; but he never evoked one spark of sympathy with the great creation of Shakspere [*Hamlet*], he never let you forget Mr. Wallack, he never identified himself with the part.

ADAM BADEAU: 'The Vagabond, Edwin Forrest,' New York, 1859.

Mr. James W. Wallack, Sr., played an engagement this season [1836-7], to good business. The Mobilians were delighted, most especially with his *Rolla*, *Massaroni* (the 'Brigand'); *Benedick*, in 'Much Ado About Nothing'; *Dashall*, in 'My Aunt,' and others that I cannot now remember. He has never been equalled in this country in the above characters by anybody that I have seen.

N. M. LUDLOW: 'Dramatic Life as I Found It,' chap. 45.

Then came a season with great old Wallack himself, the father of Mr. Lester Wallack, the greatest of all melodramatic actors, and one of the best actors in any part, charming and courtly gentleman that he was. He seemed in private life to have every virtue and a most honorable character. He was an ornament to his profession, he lifted it immeasurably by being of it, and he was, even when old, the most romantic hero of them all.

I saw him play with the late Mrs. Conway, then a most beautiful creature, in several unforgotten plays. the 'Scholar' was one of them. That was one of the class of plays which was almost too good to look at. The *Scholar's* struggle with himself when he found that he loved his pupil, and she him, was of the class of emotions which none but the most subtle of artists could hope to present. Wallack did it so nobly that you doubted if you ought to be looking. His *Benedick* with Mrs. Conway's *Beatrice* was as fresh and breezy as if he had been twenty, instead of sixty; and who can forget those little speeches before the curtain—the grace, the ease, the gallantry—all was as young as the rose in his button-hole.

To have heard old Wallack, as he grew to be called, (rather as a title of distinction than as a sign of old age,) to have heard him sing 'Gentle Zitella' was said to have been the Pavia of our grandmothers. I never heard it. I once saw him play *Don Cesar de Bazan*, his original character, I believe. It was done, of course, in the most dashing and brilliant style. I have seen Lester Wallack, Walcot, Fechter, and Booth in that splendid part, all so good that I

cannot say which I liked best. *Don Cæsar* plays himself.

MRS. E. W. SHERWOOD: *New York Times*, Jan. 20, 1875.

He was probably one of the best general actors in Europe or this country. He was a man of great versatility, and I could name many parts in which no actor has ever been his equal. He was superior for instance in *Benedick* in 'Much Ado About Nothing,' which was probably his best part. Among his other celebrated characters were his *Don Cæsar de Bazan*, *Martin Heywood* in the 'Rent Day,' *Rolla* in 'Pizarro,' *Alessandro* in the 'Brigand,' *Shylock* in the 'Merchant of Venice,' and *Dick Dashall* in 'My Aunt.' He was equally clever in tragedy and light comedy, and had few equals in melodramatic parts. Indeed I think he has probably done more to elevate the drama in this country and England, than any other ten actors. As an actor, manager and man his name will live forever.

GEORGE F. BROWNE: reported in *New York Tribune*, April 18, 1880.

While playing in 'Wild Oats,' at the Haymarket, Mr. James Wallack being the *Rover*, an old gentleman in the corner of the dress circle next to the stage had risen from his seat, and was putting on his great-coat and comforter very deliberately, when Wallack addressed him, being always very much annoyed if the audience moved before the piece was ended, which is often the case, so that the last few lines are inaudible. "I beg your pardon, sir," said Wallack, "but the piece

is not quite over." The old gentleman was quite prepared, and replied, "Thank you, Mr. Wallack, but I've had quite enough of it." This turned the laugh against Wallack.

HENRY H. HOWE : 'The Green Room,' Christmas, 1880.

Wallack and Tom Cooke would gravely meet, remove with stolid countenances *each other's* hat, bow ceremoniously, replace it, and pass on without exchanging a word, to the astonishment of the beholders.

J. R. PLANCHÉ : 'Recollections and Reflections,' vol. ii., chap. 3.

I owe much of my success to the elder Wallack and to Rachel. Wallack showed me the necessity of conveying at a rehearsal what you intend to do at night, and the importance of paying strict attention to the minutest detail. He was one of the most thorough stage managers I ever met. We were like a set of school-boys under discipline. We had to give a reason for everything, and therefore to study hard.

E. A. SOTHERN : 'Birds of a Feather,' p. 57.

Mr. Wallack was about the medium height, gracefully proportioned and possessing an air of dignity and intelligence. His dress was always scrupulously neat, and with the most fastidious taste, having somewhat of a Parisian appearance. Of late years he walked with a cane, and a careful observer might have noticed that he pursued his steps toilsomely and with apparent difficulty.

He was, probably, up to the time of his retiring from the stage, the best of the old school of actors, and although critics might be disposed to question his genius in the highest walks of tragedy, still his eminence was a well-established fact, and his reputation was greatest in dramas of a romantic and picturesque order, in which his vigor, fire, and dashing energy, are said to have produced the most extraordinary effects.

His *Rolla* was great, and universally pronounced an unrivalled performance of its kind,—his *Julian St. Pierre*, unapproachable ; his *Reuben Glenroy*, superb ; his *Benedick*, a masterpiece ; his *Shylock*, and *Don Cæsar*, admirable.

In comedy and farce he also displayed great abilities, and the above characters will convey some idea of his peculiar and versatile talents.

* * * * - - *

As a man, Mr. Wallack had hosts of friends, and deserved them. Cultivated and honorable, nothing offended him more than vulgarity, and nothing exasperated him more than overreaching. His dignity and simple courtesy were no less familiar to all who approached him, than the affability and generous feeling which inspired all his words and deeds. Fond of a jovial, intellectual life, he delighted in merry, intelligent companions, and no one knew better than himself how to entertain others with wit, humor and interesting conversation.

T. H. MORRELL : ‘Memoir of James Wm. Wallack,’
New York, 1865, pp. 55–6, 58–9.

MARY ANN DUFF.

1795—1857.

Mary, I believed thee true,
And I was blessed in thus believing ;
But now I mourn that e'er I knew
A girl so fair and so deceiving,—
Fare thee well !

Few have ever loved like me,—
Yes, I have loved thee too sincerely !
And few have e'er deceived like thee,—
Alas ! deceived me too severely.

Fare thee well ! yet think awhile
On one whose bosom bleeds to doubt thee—
Who now would rather trust that smile
And die with thee than live without thee.

Fare thee well ! I'll think of thee ;
Thou leav'st me many a bitter token ;
For see, distracting woman, see,
My peace is gone, my heart is broken !—
Fare thee well !

THOMAS MOORE.



MARY ANN DUFF
As Mary.

MARY ANN DUFF.

No actress ever connected with the American stage is deserving of more honorable mention than the queenly Mrs. Duff, who for many years was acknowledged by all contemporary critics as the finest tragedienne of her time. If not kings, yet sages and stoics, white heads and wise ones too, have bowed at her feet, where she and sorrow sat enthroned.

Born in London in 1795, Mary Ann Dyke was first introduced to the stage at the Dublin Theatre in 1808, with two younger sisters. They all were dancers and attracted immediate attention and admiration. One of them became the wife of Thomas Moore, the poet; while Mary married John Duff, a rising young Irish actor, and accompanied him to America, making her first appearance at the Boston Theatre as *Juliet*, on Dec. 31, 1810. For several years her husband was the leading favorite at Boston and Philadelphia, her youth and inexperience placing her in unfavorable contrast; but earnest study and continual practice finally reversed their positions, and by the year 1820, the lady had attained the flattering but deserved distinction of being the best actress in America. She it was who in 1821, at Boston, when enacting *Hermione* in the 'Distrest Mother,' to Edmund Kean's *Orestes*, was requested by him to play with less intensity, as he

desired his efforts to be seconded, not rivalled, and who was pronounced by Junius Brutus Booth, in 1826, the best actress in the world !

After attaining high celebrity in Boston and Philadelphia, Mrs. Duff made her first appearance in New York as *Hermione*, at the Park Theatre, Sept. 5, 1823, receiving the approval of every critic of the day. But while criticism extolled her personations, and taste and refinement appreciated her skill, she lacked the stamp of foreign approbation, which fashionable New Yorkers then required ; she had the misfortune to have achieved her first success in other cities, which was a fault they as emphatically condemned ; and while all acknowledged the power, grandeur and truthfulness of her acting, in New York she never became the magnet of attraction which her unrivalled merits entitled her to be. Her greatest recommendation was her acute perception of every varying phase of the character she represented, her thorough identification with it, and her entire abstraction from every scene or circumstance unconnected with the play. A certain critic remarked that Kean startled you with electric flashes, but that Mrs. Duff poured out one unceasing blaze, and that her unvarying merit was her uniformity of excellence.

In February, 1828, Mrs. Duff appeared at Drury Lane as *Isabella*, in the 'Fatal Marriage,' followed by *Adelgitha* in the tragedy of that name, in which characters she was very favorably received by the audience, with the usual diversity of opinion among the critics ; but although announced for a third appearance, as *Elvira* in 'Pizarro,' she abruptly returned to America without its performance, and

without explaining the cause of her sudden change of movement.

Until the arrival of Fanny Kemble in America in 1832, Mrs. Duff retained unquestioned superiority above all competition in tragedy, but the novelty and brilliant talent of the new comer threw her into the background, and this following the death of her husband in 1831, added to the care and anxiety connected with the support of a numerous and expensive family, seriously affected her mental condition, and for a time she appeared to be on the very verge of insanity. Recovering her health, Mrs. Duff played her last engagement in New York, in 1835, where her personations displayed all the spirit, force, feeling and pathos that characterized her earlier efforts. Won by the promise of affluence in retirement, she then accepted the hand of a Mr. Seaver, whom she accompanied to New Orleans, where she lived for many years, and where after playing a few brief engagements, she made her last appearance on the stage at the St. Charles Theatre as *Florinda*, in the 'Apostate,' on May 30, 1838.

Abjuring the Catholic faith to which she had hitherto been ardently attached, she now entered with a meek and lowly spirit into the humbler communion of the Methodist Church. She soon became noted for her loving, gentle disposition—which indeed she had always evinced during the proudest periods of her theatrical career—for her deeds of charity and mercy, for her persuasive entreaties to the sinning, her eloquent exhortations to the repentant, and her kindly ministrations to the sick and suffering. She took an active part in Sunday-school teachings, joined the Temperance Society, and was the centre of a religious

circle, from which the bounty of her hand and the comfort of her prayers were never withheld. Avoiding players and playhouses, she seemingly strove to forget that she had ever been among them, and in return became almost forgotten by them and by the public; so that in 1857, when, suffering from an internal cancer, she resumed her residence in New York with one of her daughters, her old friends knew not of her return, and were unable to express their sympathy for her condition, or to show the last tribute of respect at her funeral services. Her death occurred on Sept. 5, in that year, in the 63d year of her age; and the strictest privacy was observed in connection therewith.

In early life, Mrs. Duff possessed unusual beauty of countenance, dark, brilliant eyes, great elegance of form, and a soft, clear voice, which, though usually remarked for its plaintive tenderness, could, when necessity required, be used to express the harsher passions with a vigor and intensity absolutely startling. Her list of parts included every tragic heroine of Shakspere; and although she possessed few requisites for comedy, she occasionally represented *Katherine the Shrew*, and a few others in that line. Outside of the great dramatist, her personations of *Jane Shore*, *Mrs. Beverley*, *Mrs. Haller*, *Belvidera*, *Imogene*, *Lady Randolph*, and *Madame Clermont* were at the time considered unapproached.

JOSEPH NORTON IRELAND.

Mrs. Duff made her first appearance as *Juliet* to her husband's *Romeo*. A more beautiful woman had not

trod the stage, and so far as the making up and *personale* was concerned it was admitted that a more gentle *Juliet*, or one possessing so black an eye, had not appeared; but the "spirit" seemed wanting. Her style was indifferent, and lacked both power and conception, and her best friends lost all hope of her ever assuming a position. Mr. Duff had his faults, and among them love of jovial company, which threatened to check his prosperity as an actor. Stimulated by necessity, and fearful, perhaps, that she might at any moment be thrown upon her own resources, Mrs. Duff brightened up, and though for years she had been content to toil and travel as a third-rate actress, she suddenly, as if touched by a magic wand, threw off the languor of indifference and exhibited the true fire of genius. The change was sudden, but it proved permanent, as many who recollect her *Belvidera*, *Juliet*, etc., at the Tremont can testify.

W. W. CLAPP : 'Boston Stage,' chap. vii., pp. 115-16.

Mrs. Duff's benefit takes place this evening, she playing *Elvira*; Cooper, *Rolla*; Mrs. Darley, *Cora*; and Wood, *Pizarro*, in Kotzebue's play of 'Pizarro.'

All those who frequent the theatre, and many of those who do not, owe Mrs. Duff a debt, which is but scantily repaid by attending the performances of which she is to receive the pecuniary profit.

If native dignity of conduct, unspotted reputation, moral worth, and the possession of all the virtues of domestic life, joined to uncommon beauty, and talents of the very first order, tend to elevate the character of the stage, and make the theatre the fit resort of the

most scrupulous, then we repeat do we owe Mrs. Duff a debt, for which we give but a scanty payment, when we attend her benefit.

Baltimore Gazette, Nov. 11, 1826.

Mrs. Duff's *Mrs. Beverley* is a wonderful effort, and was so acknowledged by the house, for hardly an eye denied the tribute of a tear. There is not a beauty in the dialogue of this most affecting tragedy that was not distinctly marked by this accomplished actress. Her jewels were destined to adorn a wanton, but when *Stukely* proffered love, his baseness was revealed, and with one withering look she blasted all the expectations of the villain. How her perfect love and unsullied honor sustained her to the last, how her noble and virtuous nature would still dwell on the happiness that awaited them in days to come, no pen can describe. Her husband expired; she shrieked and dropped upon his lifeless corpse! For a moment all was still; but the next, this admirable actress received as proud a tribute as was ever given to dramatic excellence. The impression made by this representation exceeded anything we ever witnessed.

New York Evening Post, Nov. 25, 1826.

We have no space to express in sufficient detail our surprise and admiration at the *Madame Clermont* of Mrs. Duff. The play is excessively trashy, but *her acting* is peculiarly fine. Since the time of Miss O'Neill we have seen no performer so successful in the delineation of maternal affection. It would be judicious in Mrs. Duff to persuade her husband to

make himself master of his author. His inaccuracy and forgetfulness on Tuesday were shameful.

New York Albion, Feb. 10, 1827.

Mr. Kean has pronounced her *Madame Clermont*, which she has chosen for her benefit, the most finished performance he ever witnessed. We are confident there will be a rush to see it.

New York Evening Post, March 8, 1827.

We have for a long time intended to speak of her in a separate article, and more at length than the limits of a notice of the performances through the week would permit. The subject, however, is one of difficulty. There are few who are not able to appreciate good playing, but there are fewer who are capable of conveying to the mere reader anything like a distinct idea of an actor's merits.

To Mrs. Duff in particular this observation applies. In her style of acting there are none of those prominent points, none of those strongly marked characteristics, which are of such service to the dramatic critic in his observations on the stage.

Mrs. Duff has one great characteristic, one remarkable peculiarity that strikes all who see her, and that is *uniformity of excellence*. She makes no points. We cannot say of her as we used to say of Kean,—“that's a beautiful touch.” Her merits and defects (though the latter are few in number and trivial in moment) pervade the whole of every character she undertakes. There is no singling them out and saying “such a speech was given in a pre-eminently fine manner, and in such a scene she did not seem to have a

full conception of her author's meaning." From beginning to end, from her first entrance to her final exit, you see before you only the character she is personating. The unity of her conception—the *oneness*—is remarkable. No temptation can induce her to break it. If a scene offer ever so much opportunity for display, and it be a display not authorized by the whole design and tenor of the part, she suffers it to pass by unnoticed.

This is the perfection of her art. This is the way to deceive and delight an audience. They forget they are in a theatre, and "live o'er the scene."

If a noise occur in the gallery, Mrs. Duff exhibits no consciousness of it as many very naturally do, thus permitting the player to be seen through the regal robe or sacerdotal habit.

She seems to have a separate existence during the continuance of the play, and to have lost all knowledge of, and even all power of seeing, the realities around her. Kean used to startle us by electric flashes; Mrs. Barnes occasionally shines out with great brilliancy; but Mrs. Duff pours out one unceasing blaze during the whole time she occupies the stage. We do not mean to say that there is a uniformity of interest in all she does, but a uniformity of excellence.

In an important passage she gives us no declamation or rant on the one hand, and on the other she does not think it beneath her powers and slight it.

The playing of this lady may be compared to the poetry of Goldsmith. No fits and starts, no rising and falling, except as the dignity of the subject varies. There is scarcely a person who ever read 'The Deserted Village' for the first time who did not think himself

capable of writing as well, till by the experiment he became convinced of his error. This arises from the truth of the sentiment, and the care and beautiful polish the author has bestowed on that admirable production. So it is with Mrs. Duff's acting. At first when we see her, we are like Partridge in Fielding's novel, and are ready to exclaim, "Psha, there is no great excellence in that." This impression, however, is of no great duration, and we soon are willing to acknowledge that her art is perfect in proportion as it assimilates itself to nature.

In the Bourbonic Museum at Naples there is a large fragment of an unfinished statue of Hercules. It is unfinished, but every line and trace about it declare it to have been the work of a master genius. So it is with the playing of several of our prominent actresses, but it is not so with Mrs. Duff, whose work is finished at every point.

Since we have drawn an illustration from sculpture, we might properly speak of her style as bearing a resemblance to the immortal Phidian Goddess, every feature of which is true to nature, but which presents a whole more beautiful than Nature's choicest works. Who that has seen Mrs. Duff in the part of *Jane Shore*, for example, will not perceive the aptness of the remark? In every line, in every word, she is true to the author, and departs not in a single instance from his delineation; yet the character as given by her is one of far greater dignity than Rowe had the ability to draw.

New York Mirror, May 5, 1827.

The stage for the past week has indeed presented a 'Comedy of Errors.' The high soaring of genius has

been unheeded, and senseless mimicry and grimace have borne the ascendant.

It is a singular fact that an actress of more decided talent in tragedy than any one on the English stage at this hour, has performed three nights at the Federal Street Theatre to little better than bare walls. Nor can our play-going community plead ignorance of her merits ; here they first electrified an audience, and here they first burst forth from obscurity into sunshine.

At this moment Mrs. Duff is more highly gifted than ever ; her powers have ripened into mature excellence, and in her particular line her contemporaries readily yield her the palm. We think she has greatly improved since her last visit, and are convinced she can make a stand in any theatre whatever.

On Friday evening we saw her for the first time in *Madame Clermont*, and since her wonderful effort in *Hermione* we have seen nothing to equal it. In the last scene she seemed to throw off her identity, and looked and moved as a supernatural being ; her face assumed a cast altogether Siddonian, and her hurried and pathetic tones penetrated us with an involuntary shudder. We could only lament the capriciousness of taste which would disregard such talent in pursuit of buffoonery and farce.

Boston Gazette, Oct. 21, 1827.

Pronounced by the elder Booth to be the best actress in the world ; rebuked by the elder Kean for attracting from him his proper share of the night's applause ; complimented by Cooper and Forrest as the most desirable coadjutress with whom they had ever

been associated ; playing with the elder Conway to be proclaimed his superior ; acknowledged openly before Judge Irving, in the New York Court of Common Pleas, by William M. Price (an eminent lawyer, and brother of Stephen Price, the lessee of the old Park Theatre,) to be "*the most distinguished actress in this or any other country;*" honored by Horace Greeley's printed opinion that her *Lady Macbeth* has never since been equalled ; and sustained by the criticisms of the entire press of the union,— Mrs. Duff possessed higher testimonials of ability than have ever been awarded to any other actress on the American stage ; and these have been reinforced by the testimony of that glorious artist and thoroughly competent judge, John Gilbert, who at the present day asserts that she was, without exception, the most exquisite tragic actress he ever saw.

JOSEPH N. IRELAND : 'Life of Mrs. Duff.' *Introduction.*

Old actors and audiences shed tears over the perfection of imitated nature. Hyatt, a veteran actor, was so overcome by the performance of *Helen McGregor* by Mrs. J. Duff, that he cried from emotion like a child.

HENRY DICKENSON STONE : 'Theatrical Reminiscences,' *chap. 1, p. 9.*

This lady's acting was very justly and greatly admired. She was at that time undoubtedly the best tragic actress in the United States. By her acting she has interested the people of the United States quite as much as any one that ever appeared on

the stage in this country. In neither Boston or Philadelphia, after performing in both cities for a number of years, had Mrs. Duff been supposed to possess such wonderful tragic powers as she now began to develop. In 1823 she played an engagement conjointly with her husband in Philadelphia for a few nights, concluding with her benefit, which was an immensely crowded house, the receipts being nearly treble that of her husband's, who had hitherto been considered the greater feature of the two. Mrs. Duff's great personal beauty added to her talent and her amiable qualities as a lady endeared her to all hearts. In Philadelphia, Mr. and Mrs. Duff were frequently spoken of as "the handsome couple."

N. M. LUDLOW : 'Dramatic Life As I Found It,'
chap. 44.

Fifty years ago I made my début at Boston. I commenced with a first-class tragedy part. The public said it was a success. I certainly thought so. The manager evidently thought so too, for he let me repeat it. I suppose it was good for a young man. It might have been that it was an inspiration, for the *Lady Belvidera* of the play was Mrs. Duff, the most exquisite tragic actress I ever saw, and I make no exception.

She was so great an artist that when the elder Kean saw her in an obscure part in Boston, he was so astonished and astounded that he said that there was nothing equal to her on the English stage.

JOHN GILBERT : Speech at Lotos Club, New York,
Nov. 29, 1878.

JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH.

1796-1852.

Shall we who see such fire believe thee old ?

Yes, old, but yet not stale ; for like to wine
Thy spirit, while those sinews vigor hold,

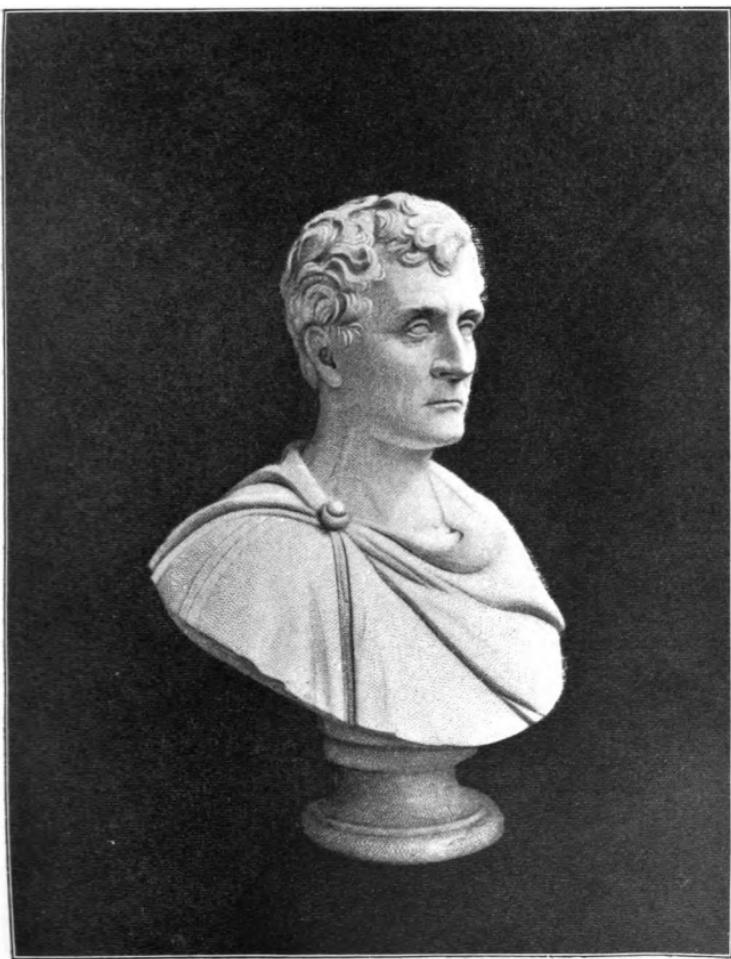
Years cannot ravish of its power divine.
The glow of genius Time cannot eclipse,

Till death restores it to the land of light !—
Long be his pale seal absent from thy lips,
And reason guide that wayward mind aright !

Health to thee, Junius ! for a heart thou hast
That spurns the cold cares of a cunning world,
And linked with many a legend of the past,
Thy sterling nature often has unfurled.

Meekness, companion of the truly great,
Strong common-sense, that always speaks a man,
Unchanging courtesy to low estate,—
These exalt thee as high as genius can

W. O. EATON.



JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH.

JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH.

[JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH. Born St. Pancras, London, May 1, 1796. First appeared at Deptford, Dec. 13, 1813, as *Campillo* in the 'Honeymoon.' First appeared in London at Covent Garden, as *Richard III.*, Feb. 12, 1817. Married Mary Anne Holmes, Jan. 18, 1821. Sailed for America, April, 1821. Landed at Norfolk, Va., June 30, 1821. First appeared in America at Richmond, Va., July 6, 1821, as *Richard III.* First appeared in New York, at the Park Theatre, Oct. 5, 1821, as *Richard III.* First appeared in Boston, May 6, 1822, in the same character. First appeared in Philadelphia, Feb. 17, 1823, at the Chestnut Street Theatre, in the same part. Returned to England in the autumn of 1825, opening as *Brutus* at Drury Lane. Played engagements at Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Brussels, etc. In March, 1827, was at the Park Theatre, New York. In 1828 undertook the stage management of Camp Street Theatre of New Orleans, playing *Orestes* in Racine's 'Andromaque' in the French language, Feb. 19, 1828. Became lessee of the Adelphi Theatre, Baltimore, 1831. Played *Second Actor* to the *Hamlet* of Charles Kean in that house in the same season. Went again to England in 1836-7. Played at Drury Lane and elsewhere. Returned to New York, July, 1837. Lived on his farm in Maryland

and made occasional professional tours during the next fifteen years. Visited California July, 1852. Played in San Francisco and Sacramento. Went to New Orleans in the autumn of the same year. Made his last appearance on any stage at the St. Charles Theatre there, Nov. 19, 1852, as *Sir Edward Mortimer* in the 'Iron Chest,' and *John Lump* in the 'Review.' Died on a Mississippi steamer, Nov. 30, 1852, on his way to Cincinnati. Buried in Greenmount Cemetery, Baltimore.

B. M.
L. H.]

SOME WORDS ABOUT MY FATHER.

To those who are interested in theatrical history, the following meagre sketch of my father may not be satisfactory ; for though the greater part of my boyhood was passed in close attendance upon him, his career, professional and personal, has been so fully discussed by able annalists of the stage that little, if anything, can be told to enlighten the reader regarding the erratic course of that extraordinary actor, whose portrayal of all serious emotions thrilled and charmed, while his eccentricities puzzled, the play-goers of his time. My recollections of him are somewhat sombre ; and though many of them possess a certain grotesque humor, their recital could serve no better purpose than to gratify the curious or make the unskilful laugh, and therefore would be worthless.

His "oddities" were sources of suffering to him, and it is not for the son to publish what the sire—could he have done so—would have concealed. It may not be deemed unfilial in me, however, to recount

a few episodes which may tend to explain away much that was imputed to vices of the blood in him whose memory is still revered by many who knew him well, and will ever be a veneration to me who knew him best.

To comprehend the peculiar temperament with which my father charmed, roused and subdued the keenest and the coarsest intellects of his generation, one should be able to understand that great enigma to the wisest—‘Hamlet.’ Bulwer has somewhere said :

Genius, the Pythian of the Beautiful,
Leaves her large truths a riddle to the dull ;
From eyes profane a veil the Isis screens,
And fools on fools still ask—what *Hamlet* means.

To my dull thinking, *Hamlet* typifies uneven or unbalanced Genius. But who shall tell us what genius, of any sort whatever, means? The possessor, or rather the possessed, of it is, as in *Hamlet's* case, more frequently its slave than its master; being irresistibly, and often unconsciously, swayed by its capriciousness. Great minds to madness closely are allied. *Hamlet's* mind, at the very edge of frenzy, seeks its relief in ribaldry. For a like reason would my father open, so to speak, the safety-valve of levity in some of his most impassioned moments. At the instant of intense emotion, when the spectators were enthralled by his magnetic influence, the tragedian's overwrought brain would take refuge from its own threatening storm beneath the jester's hood, and, while turned from the audience, he would whisper some silliness or “make a face.” When he left the stage, however, no allusion to such seeming frivolity was permitted. His fellow

actors who perceived these trivialities, ignorantly attributed his conduct at such times to lack of feeling ; whereas it was the extreme excess of feeling which thus forced his brain back from the very verge of madness. Only those who have known the torture of severe mental tension, can appreciate the value of that one little step from the sublime to the ridiculous. My close acquaintance with so fantastic a temperament as was my father's, so accustomed me to that in him which appeared strange to others, that much of *Hamlet's* "mystery" seems to me no more than idiosyncrasy. It likewise taught me charity for those whose evil or imperfect genius sways them to the mood of what it likes or loathes.

Reserved and diffident, almost bashful, when away from home, my father behind his locked doors and bolted shutters, was as gleeful as a child. Soon after sunrise he would dig in his garden, whistling while he worked ; but when visitors were announced, an unconscious selfishness made him deny himself to all callers. Contented within his family circle he could not appreciate the necessity for any extraneous element there ; hence, his wife and children became isolated, and were ill at ease in the presence of other than their own immediate relatives.

The effect of his unfortunate disposition for seclusion was never eradicated, the family in consequence suffered a sense of estrangement, while it caused those who knew my father superficially to deem him moody or morose, which was not the case, although a man of moods undoubtedly he was. Only when the spirit moved him could he render justice to his work, and, sometimes, when not i' the vein, he would

refuse to act or, without a word of warning, would quit the crowded theatre to be lost to the world for days ; re-imbursing his manager afterward, however, by performing without more remuneration than was sufficient to defray his own small expenses. On one such occasion, when his engagement was advertised to begin the First of April, an erring fancy impelled him to walk some distance from the city at the time when he should have been in the theatre. The audience, supposing his non-appearance to be a managerial trick to fill the house with "April Fools," was loudly indignant. The manager endeavored to pacify his patrons by promising on his honor, that Mr. Booth should not set foot upon that stage while he controlled it. This was received with hisses by his hearers, who left the theatre determined to remain away from it, until yielding to their demand, the appearance of Mr. Booth (his heroic title, Junius Brutus, were never used in the play-bills with his consent) was again announced. He was greeted with affectionate enthusiasm on his return, and acted finely throughout the engagement. At the time of this occurrence, he had left me at home, in compliance with my mother's wish that "Edwin should remain at school." But soon a message came for me to go to him. While not his favorite, my presence seemed necessary to him when at his work, although at other times he almost ignored me, perhaps because his other children were more vivacious and amused him. His reception of me was not very cordial—"Did you bring your school-books?" They were in my trunk, but were seldom looked at ; his play-books were my more congenial studies. This was his only greeting ; yet throughout my long association with him, a mother-

like solicitude for me tempered his most irrational moods. He wished none of his children to follow his calling. Not that he considered it unworthy, but because its effect upon his nervous system caused him so much distress that he preferred they should engage in some more healthful work, anything that was *true*, rather than that they should be of that unreal world where nothing is but what is not. According to his programme my vocation should have been that of a cabinet-maker (a notion suggested by the lease of his farm to one of that trade), but much to his chagrin, accident ordained for me a different pursuit. Strange as it may seem, chance, not predilection for the stage, determined my way of life. After my *début* in the very small part of *Tressel*, he "coddled" me; gave me gruel (his usual meal at night, when acting) and made me don his worsted night-cap, which when his work was ended he always wore as a protection for his heated head, to prevent me from taking cold after my labors, which were doubtless very exhausting on that occasion, being confined to one brief scene at the beginning of the play! At that time there seemed to be a touch of irony in this over-care of me, but *now*, recalling the many acts of his large sympathy, it appears in its true character of genuine solicitude for the heedless boy who had drifted into that troublous sea, where without talent he would either sink or, buoyed perhaps by vanity alone, merely flounder in its uncertain waves. During my second season on the stage, he doubtless determined to test my "quality," and one evening, just as he should have started for the theatre to prepare for his performance of *Richard III.*, he feigned illness; nor would he leave the bed where he

had been napping (his custom always in the afternoon), but told me to go and act *Richard* for him. This amazed me ; for my experience as yet had been confined to minor parts. But he could not be coaxed to waver from his determination not to act that night, and as it was time for the manager to be notified, there was no course to pursue but to go to the theatre to announce the fact. "Well," exclaimed the manager, "there is no time to change the bill ; we must close the house—unless *you* will act the part." The stage-director and several actors present urged me to try it, and, before my brain had recovered from its confusion, they hurried me into my father's dress, and on to the stage, in a state of bewilderment. My effort was not altogether futile, for it satisfied my father that his boy's prospects were fair for, at least, a reputable position in the profession. Thenceforth he made no great objection to my acting occasionally with him, although he never gave me instruction, professional advice or encouragement in any form : he had, doubtless, resolved to make me work my way unaided ; and though his seeming indifference was painful then, it compelled me to exercise my callow wits ; it made me *think!* And for this he has ever had my dearest gratitude. During my constant attendance on him in the theatre he forbade my quitting his dressing-room—where he supposed my school-lessons were studied. But the idle boy, ignoring Lindley Murray and such small deer, seldom seeing the actors, listened at the keyhole to the garbled text of the mighty dramatists, as given in the acting versions of the plays. By this means at an early age my memory became stored with the words of *all* the parts of every play in which my father

performed. In after years the authors' true text became my more careful study.

To see my father act, when in the acting mood, was *not* "like reading Shakspere by flashes of lightning" which could give but fitful glimpses of the author's meaning ; but the full sunlight of his genius shone on every character that he portrayed, and so illumined the obscurities of the text that Shakspereans wondered with delight at his lucid interpretation of passages which to them had previously been unintelligible. At his best he soared higher into the realm of Art sublime than any of his successors have reached ; and to those who saw him then it was not credible that any of his predecessors could have surpassed him. His expressions of terror and remorse were painful in the extreme, his hatred and revenge were devilish, but his tenderness was exquisitely human. As *Richard* and *Lear* he reluctantly, though valiantly, contested the crown with Kean at the zenith of the latter's fame, but threw away his more than half-won victory as 'twere a careless trifle. Indeed, he ever seemed to muse with Omar Khayyám thus :

The worldly hope men set their hearts upon
Turns to ashes—or it prospers ; and anon,
Like snow upon the desert's dusty face,
Lighting a little hour or two—was gone !

and tossed aside his triumphs with indifference.

Whatever the part he had to personate, he was from the time of its rehearsal until he slept at night imbued with its very essence. If *Othello* was billed for the evening he would, perhaps, wear a crescent pin on his breast that day ; or, disregarding the fact that Shakspere's Moor was a Christian, he would mumble maxims of the Koran. Once, when he was about to

perform *Othello* in Baltimore, a band of Arabs visited that city to exhibit their acrobatic feats and jugglery. To my mother's great disgust, but to the infinite delight of her children, my father entertained the unsavory sons of "Araby the blest" in the parlor. As a linguist he was proficient, and among his many tongues he had acquired some use of Arabic, in which he conversed with his guests, or rather with their spokesman, Budh, whose name suggested consanguinity; "for," said he, "Booth and Budh are from the same root." If *Shylock* was to be his part at night, he was a Jew all day; and if in Baltimore at the time, he would pass hours with a learned Israelite, who lived near by, discussing Hebrew history in the vernacular and insisting that, although he was of Welsh descent, that nation is of Hebraic origin; a belief for which there is some foundation. As the pirate, *Bertram*, he once reproved me for scolding a negro messenger-boy who unwittingly crossed the stage in view of the audience, by saying—"Let him alone, sir! Let him alone! He is one of my gang." My last experience of his vagaries, was at our final parting on the ship that bore him forever from me. He asked a sailor on deck to take his luggage to his cabin. The fellow replied—"I'm no flunkie." "What are you, sir?" demanded my father. "I'm a thief," responded the brute. Instantly the actor assumed his favorite part of *Bertram* at this "cue," and said—"Your hand, comrade, I'm a pirate!" the sailor laughed and rejoined, "All right, my covey; where's your traps?" and carried the trunk to the stateroom. His influence on the lowest minds was as great as it was strong over the highest intellects with which he came in contact.

He disliked to assume those characters (especially historical ones) to which his size was not adapted. Being requested by his old friend and manager, Wemyss, to study *Richelieu* for the latter's benefit, my father replied—"No, sir! No. The Cardinal was tall and gaunt; I cannot look him. Nonsense! Announce me as *Jerry Sneak* or *John Lump*—not *Richelieu*." (The comic characters named, were the only two that my father retained in his repertory; and 'twas pity that he did so.) Wemyss coaxed and finally prevailed. An old red gown was found in the very limited wardrobe of the theatre, my father having no appropriate costume for the part, and thus shabbily attired, *His Eminence* with *Father Joseph* appeared before an expectant audience. The dialogue hitched and halted for a while, until losing self-control, *Richelieu* seized his companion by the arms and waltzed him about the stage, to the amazement of the spectators and the dismay of Wemyss, who quickly lowered the curtain and frantically tore the hair of his wig, as the star coolly inquired—"Well, my boy, how d'ye like my *Richelieu*?" He disappeared for several days after this freak, to return with welcome to the scene of his mad exploit.

Favorite actors were then permitted many extravagances which would not be tolerated now, and too often they abused the privilege granted by an indulgent public; but such was not my father's error. Although his eccentricities were invariably attributed to the effect of alcohol, the charge was mainly false.

As much as wine did play the Infidel,
And rob him of his robe of honor,

it should be known that the fineness of his organization

was so acute that a bottle of porter, his favorite beverage when fatigued, or a single glass of brandy and water, would excite him as much as five times the quantity would affect another. A single drop of the liquor which the dullard absorbs with impunity, will often disturb and distract the finest intellect. The vagaries here rehearsed were due solely to his peculiarly sensitive temperament. How often has the desire to hide myself almost mastered my own will, when, mentally or physically unfit, duty has compelled me to entertain an audience ! If a serious actor suffers thus, what must a comic one endure when, racked with pain or grief, he is forced to laugh and amuse the public while his heart aches ! "Alas ! poor Punchinello !" That name recalls an incident which shows how humble an estimate my father had of the social position of an actor. On our way to his rehearsal one day, he was accosted by almost every one we met. To my frequent inquiries, "Father, who is that ?" he replied, "Don't know ;" until, wearied by my importunities, he exclaimed impatiently, "My child, I do not know these people ! But everybody knows 'Tom-fool !'"

He seldom spoke of actors or the theatre ; indeed, it is doubtful if any actor's family knew so little of theatrical affairs or gossip as did his. But once after reading 'Coriolanus' to me until far into the morning, he spoke of the marvelous acting of Edmund Kean—the only time he ever indulged me with even a glimpse of his reminiscences. The reading of 'Coriolanus' was superb ; but to my eager question, "Why don't you act that part ?" he replied, "Nonsense ! 'Twould seem absurd for one of my inches to utter such boastful

speeches. I cannot look *Coriolanus*." This imaginary obstacle (his size) prevented his more frequent performances of *Othello* and *Macbeth*, although his treatment of both was eminently Shaksperean and profoundly affecting. Though low in stature, he seemed to tower ten feet high when, as *Brutus*, he cursed "the monster, *Tarquin*;" and this was the case in many instances when, in other parts, the flight of passion lifted him above the level of ordinary actors. In extolling the virtues of the dead *Lucretia*, and when sentencing the unfilial *Titus* to the axe, his pathos moved not only the audience to tears and sobs, but often even the Roman citizens on the stage were known to "sniff" and rub their noses furtively. Seriously to affect a stage mob denotes unusual, if not extraordinary, magnetism in the speaker. The following incident relative to this play (Payne's 'Brutus') may serve to illustrate further my father's absorption in his work. In the last scene, when all was hush as death, and while *Brutus* (my father) was holding his son, *Titus* (myself) in close embrace at their final parting, a senseless fellow in front made some rude remark which disturbed both audience and actors. Raising his head from off my breast, my father, without lapsing from the stern Roman character of judge, and with a lightning glance toward the fellow, said—"Beware, I am the headsman!" It was like a thunder-shock! All in front and on the stage seemed paralyzed, until the thunders of applause that followed broke the spell; the scene thenceforward proceeded without interruption, and ended, as it should end, in tearful silence.

The characters of *Brutus*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, *Richard III.*, *Cassius*, *Bertram*, *Skylock*, *Pescara* and

Sir Edward Mortimer, are more distinct in my remembrance of my father's impersonations than others of his large repertory. They are vivid, deathless, in my memory; and for many years it required my most watchful care to avoid too close a following of his rendering of them, which would but make me ridiculous in my own esteem, even if it escaped the censure of the few who might remember the great personator of those characters. Take, for example, his mad challenge to *Lord Lovel* when as *Sir Giles* he dashed like lightning from the scene and as quickly returned to ask with livid lips and chilling voice, "Are you pale?" at which not only the pit as in Kean's case rose at him, but the whole audience frequently started to its feet in amazement and with cheers. The effect was electrical—indescribable! To reproduce such a scene as he gave it, is simply impossible, and all attempts to do so by his many imitators were ridiculous.

My father's mind was quick to apprehend the Master's subtlest and sublimest conceptions; his frame was vigorous and able to perform the weightiest tasks. Although his simulated wrath was fearful, his real anger was always "yokéd with a lamb." Even in his most angry moods there seemed to linger upon his lips the Christ-like words of Coleridge:

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things, both great and small;
For the dear God that loveth us—
He made and loveth all.

EDWIN BOOTH.

He appeared subsequently at the Brighton Theatre, when Edmund Kean, who was announced for the part of *Sir Giles Overreach*, failed to arrive, and Mr. Booth was asked to assume the character. The audience was small, and evinced much disapprobation on the entrance of the substitute ; but he had not spoken many lines ere their attention became riveted, and before the close of the play he was warmly greeted and received every mark of their satisfaction. Murmurs of his “presumption” and “youthful ambition” died away altogether, and he was hailed by acclamations of delighted surprise.

ASIA BOOTH CLARKE: ‘The Elder and the Younger Booth,’ vol. i., p. 12.

I saw Booth in the part of *Iago* to Kean’s *Othello*. The house was packed from pit to gallery ; it was a great performance, and a grand sight. The new little man behaved himself like a great hero. Kean seemed to feel the force of the new-comer, and performed up to the full height of his wonderful powers. In the jealous scene their acting appeared like a set trial of skill, and the applause that followed the end of each of their speeches swept over the house like a tornado. The effect was almost bewildering. At the end of the play, both of the actors appeared to be exhausted from the extraordinary effort they had made. Kean appeared to take much delight in bringing Booth before the curtain. He seemed to enjoy Booth’s success just as much as the audience did.

JOHN HOWARD PAYNE: ‘Letters,’ London, June 19, 1817. Gabriel Harrison’s ‘Payne,’ chap. 3, p. 72

But he must be a bold man who could venture to enter the lists with Kean, in a part like this, and who could expect anything from an audience having Kean before their eyes, but a bare indulgence and pardon. . . . Mr. Booth did not disappoint the expectation of his friends, and appears to have much exceeded the hopes of the audience. He was vigorous, spirited, and intelligent. His figure is small,—smaller even than Kean's ; his voice in its natural tones melodious, but husky and rough when overstrained ; his countenance is manly, and full of expression ; and as respects mere looks, his face and profile certainly exceed those of Kean.

Bell's Weekly Messenger, Feb. 16, 1817.

The following letter is from the pen of the celebrated William Godwin, father-in-law of Shelley and author of '*Caleb Williams* :

SKINNER STREET, Feb. 27, 1817.

Sir.—I witnessed your performance of *Richard* and *Iago*, and you may perhaps not be displeased with receiving hints and remarks from a person of old experience in matters of taste and literature. With your *Richard* I was not altogether pleased. You got through it with too much bustle, activity, and energy, and were rewarded with almost unexampled applause ; but it appeared to me a representation rather of promise than of that full conception and meditation I long for in a performer.

Your *Iago* struck me very differently,—I mean in the third act of the play, for the rest was not excellent. I have seen Garrick and most of the performers of the last age, but I confess that on that evening I saw something new. I never before saw a scene in which two male performers fairly divided the crown, and so completely kept up the ball between them, as to produce all the best effects of illusion. Your tones of insinuation, in particular when you infuse the poison of jealousy into *Othello*, were so true

that, by my faith, I felt "this tale might have won my credit too." I immediately became impressed with the persuasion, this Booth will make a real actor ! I set down these things because, as you are a very young man, they may be of use to you. But I should not have troubled you with this letter were it not for the particular situation in which you now stand. You have incurred the displeasure of the common frequenters of the theatre. I know not how the contest may terminate, but I write earnestly to recommend to you not to be cast down if the event be unfavorable. I shall be the loser if this brutal outcry drives you from the London stage, but *you* will not be the loser. The whole British dominions will be before you, which you may visit with undiminished fame. You are not driven from us for any defect in your profession. The shortness of your career will only have rendered it more illustrious in the eyes of the inhabitants of distant parts. You will be what in your profession is technically called a *star*; and country-playing, under such circumstances, is, I believe, more profitable than playing in London. You will then return to us, after a year or two, improved in your profession, and unanimously and rapturously welcomed, even by those persons who are now most eager in exploding you. I am, sir,

Your obeient servant,

WILLIAM GODWIN.

ASIA BOOTH CLARKE : 'The Elder and the Younger Booth,' vol. i., pp. 43-5.

The excitement rose to fever-pitch when—about two years after Kean's first appearance at Drury Lane Theatre—and Booth had been "starring it" as his rival at Covent Garden—it was announced that the two stage magnates were to act together in the same play, Shakspere's, perhaps grandest tragedy being selected for the purpose—Booth playing *Iago* to Kean's *Othello*. Both tragedians, of course, exerted themselves to their utmost, and acted their finest ; and the result was a triumph of performances. The house

was crammed ; the most distinguished of theatrical patrons, the most eminent among literary men and critics, being present. I remember Godwin, on coming out of the house, exclaiming rapturously, "This is a night to be remembered."

CHARLES AND MARY COWDEN CLARKE: 'Recollections of Writers,' chap. i.

He was accused of being a servile imitator of Kean, which being reiterated by the London press, became a received impression, but a very erroneous one. It was only necessary to see the two actors on the stage together, to dispel it at once. Booth felt, and acted, when on the stage with Kean, as if conscious of his inferiority, which he candidly acknowledged ; but when separated, there are many of Kean's warmest admirers who do not hesitate to pronounce his performance of *Richard*, equal, and his *Hamlet* superior, to Kean's representations of the same characters.

FRANCIS COURTNEY WEMYSS: 'Twenty-six Years of the Life of an Actor,' vol. i., p. 39.

But getting back more specifically to the date and theme I started from—the heavy tragedy business prevailed more decidedly at the Bowery Theatre, where Booth and Forrest were frequently to be heard. Though Booth *père*, then in his prime, ranging in age from forty to forty-four years (he was born in 1796), was the loyal child and continuer of the traditions of orthodox English play-acting, he stood out "himself alone" in many respects beyond any of his kind on record, and with effects and ways that broke through

all rules and all traditions. He has been well described as an actor "whose instant and tremendous concentration of passion in his delineations overwhelmed his audience and wrought it into such enthusiasm that it partook of the fever of inspiration surging through his own veins." He seems to have been of beautiful private character, very honorable, affectionate, good-natured, no arrogance, glad to give the other actors any good chances. He knew all stage points thoroughly and curiously ignored the mere dignities. I once talked with a man who had seen him do the *Second Actor* in the mock-play to Charles Kean's *Hamlet* in Baltimore. He was a marvelous linguist. He played *Shylock* once in London, giving the dialogue in Hebrew, and in New Orleans *Orestes* (Racine's 'Andromaque') in French. One trait of his habits, I have heard, was strict vegetarianism. He was exceptionally kind to the brute creation. Every once in a while he would make a break for solitude or wild freedom, sometimes for a few hours, sometimes for days. He illustrated Plato's rule that to the forming an artist of the very highest rank a dash of insanity (or what the world calls insanity) is indispensable. He was a small-sized man, yet sharp observers noticed that however crowded the stage might be in certain scenes, Booth never seemed overtopped or hidden. He was singularly spontaneous and fluctuating; in the same part each rendering differed from any of his others. He had no stereotyped positions and made no arbitrary requirements on his fellow-performers.

I happened to see what has been reckoned by experts one of the most marvelous pieces of acting ever

known. It must have been about 1834 or '35. A favorite comedian and actress at the Bowery, Thomas Flynn and his wife, were to have a joint benefit, and securing Booth for *Richard*, advertised the fact for many days beforehand. The house filled early from top to bottom. There was some uneasiness behind the scenes, for the afternoon arrived and Booth had not come from down in Maryland, where he lived. However, a few minutes before ringing-up time he made his appearance in lively condition.

After a one-act farce is over, as contrast and prelude, the curtain rises for the tragedy. I can (from my good seat in the pit pretty well front) see again Booth's quiet entrance from the side, as with head bent he slowly walks down the stage to the footlights with that peculiar and abstracted gesture, musingly kicking his sword, which he holds off from him by its sash. Though fifty years have passed since then, I can hear the clank and feel the perfect hush of perhaps three thousand people waiting. (I never saw an actor who could make more of the said hush, or wait, and hold the audience in an indescribable half-delicious, half-irritating suspense.) And so throughout the entire play all parts, voice, atmosphere, magnetism, from

Now is the winter of our discontent

to the closing death-fight with *Richmond*, were of the finest and grandest. The latter character was played by a stalwart young fellow named Ingersoll. Indeed all the renderings were wonderfully good. But the great spell cast upon the mass of hearers came from Booth. Especially was the dream scene very

impressive. A shudder went through every nervous system in the audience ; it certainly did through mine.

Without question Booth was royal heir and legitimate representative of the Garrick-Kemble-Siddons dramatic traditions ; but he vitalized and gave an unnameable *race* to those traditions with his own electric personal idiosyncrasy. (As in all art-utterance it was the subtle and powerful something *special to the individual* that really conquered.) To me, too, he stands for much else besides theatricals. I consider that my seeing the man those years glimpsed for me beyond all else that inner spirit and form — the unquestionable charm and vivacity, but intrinsic sophistication and artificiality — crystallizing rapidly upon the English stage and literature at and after Shakspere's time, and coming on accumulatively through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the beginning, fifty or forty years ago, of those disintegrating, decomposing processes now authoritatively going on. Yes ; although Booth must be classed in that antique, almost extinct school, inflated, stagey, rendering Shakspere (perhaps inevitably, appropriately) from the growth of arbitrary and often cockney conventions, his genius was to me one of the grandest revelations of my life, a lesson of artistic expression. The words, fire, energy *abandon*, found in him unprecedented meanings. I never heard a speaker or actor who could give such a sting to *hauteur* or the taunt. I never heard from any other the charm of unwaveringly perfect vocalization, without trenching at all on mere melody, the province of music.

WALT WHITMAN : *Boston Herald*, Aug. 16, 1885.

The first appearance of this great actor in Boston, where for so many years he has attracted those most conversant with the different schools of acting, and has delighted elsewhere the most critical audiences in the world by his masterly impersonations, occurred on May 6, 1822. He made his appearance as *Richard*, a character which he is identified with wherever he has performed. His acting then received the applause of a Boston audience, and up to his last appearance in this city, prior to his death, he retained the position he so eminently deserved. During his first engagement he performed *Sir Edward Mortimer*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, *Octavian*, and for his benefit, *Hamlet*, which drew an eight hundred dollar house. Booth's acting always evinced genius. Like Edmund Kean, there was inspiration in his embodiment of Shaksperean characters, and even when the words were lost to the hearing the eye needed no vocal interpreter, for Booth, more than any actor we have ever seen, possessed the power of combining a meaning in every gesture, and a silent glance was equivalent to a delivered sentence. As a soliloquist he excelled. With many actors all soliloquies seem like so many title-pages to the succeeding acts; but Booth avoided all strains after startling points, and gave to such passages, both in *Hamlet* and *Richard*, an interest without destroying the unity of the play.

WM. W. CLAPP: 'The Boston Stage,' chap. 13, pp. 195-6.

Be the audience ever so apathetic in the earlier scenes of a tragedy, let Booth present himself and utter a word, and quick as the lightning's flash, the

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spectators roused themselves and thundered their welcome. In every scene he reigned absolute master, actors and audiences quailing before his fiery glances, and breathless with terror when he gave unrestrained flow to the multitudinous passions that swelled the breast of the royal *Richard* in his death struggle. With a whisper he could chill the blood, with a glance he could extort obedience, with a gesture he drew tears. His acting may be analyzed, his intonation may be imitated, his appearance may be described, but the magnetism of his manner is indescribable—it is incomprehensible.

CHARLES BLAKE: 'Providence Stage,' chap. 2, p. 230.

A spectacle of deep interest, one as novel as it was pleasing, was offered last Tuesday night in the Orleans Theatre to the lovers of dramatic talents. Yielding to the solicitations of several gentlemen in this city, Mr. Booth consented to present himself before a French audience in the part of *Orestes*. He was aware that his pronunciation was far from being considered correct even by his most partial friends, but relying on the indulgence of a polite audience he determined to make the attempt, depending on his power of action to diminish, at least, the defect of his accent. This effort, perilous in the extreme, and which nothing but a wish to give to Frenchmen an opportunity of judging fairly of what is termed the English style of acting could have urged Mr. Booth to risk, has been crowned with the most flattering success. After the first scene the unpleasant effect of his English accent was lost in the deep and ever-increasing interest excited by the warmth of his

feelings, the earnestness of his manner, and the impetuous ardor of his delivery. There certainly were moments when the dialogue did not call for the enthusiastic vigor which carried away the hearers without giving them time to attend to mere sounds, when harsh and discordant words wounded the delicacy of French ears ; but, whenever passion rose high, and, above all, when the furies goaded *Orestes* to crimes, the accomplishment of his fatal destinies, criticism was merged into admiration, and, with one voice, all wondered that a stranger should thus feel and express all the beauties of Racine.

* * * * *

The spectators, after the curtain dropped, called for Mr. Booth and saluted him by long and reiterated applause.

It were unjust not to say that 'Andromaque' had been judiciously selected ; the 'Distressed Mother,' the title given by Philip to his translation of that tragedy, having made it as familiar to the English as it is to all French readers.

Louisiana Courier [English edition], Feb. 21, 1828.

The accident by which his nose was broken, spoiling forever his noble profile, threatened for a time the more serious disaster of a permanent injury to his voice. Immediately on recovery he began to play. To those who, during these first performances, recalled the perfect features and the resonant tones of former years, the sight and sound were indeed pitiful. The head tones were scarcely perceptible. But instead of humoring this vocal infirmity, he spoke with all the old mastery of motive, and let the result take care of itself

By this persistent method, in less than two years after the accident, his voice had completely recovered its original scope, variety, and power, as we can attest by close, solicitous, and comparative observation.

THOMAS R. GOULD: 'The Tragedians,' pp. 35-6.

The elder Booth, as Mr. Gilbert remembers him, was one of the most gentle and good-tempered of men. Unlike many great actors, he always had a kind word for the most insignificant members of the companies with which he played, and he was ever ready to excuse their blunders. An incident will illustrate the latter trait in his character. He was playing *Sir Edward Mortimer* in the 'Iron Chest'—one of his greatest parts—to an immense audience, and was just on the point of making the most effective speech which he had in the play, when, by a mistake of one of the minor characters, he was obliged—to make sense of the scene—to slur it over and go on without delivering the speech in question. When the curtain fell, the young man who had made the mistake stood in fear and trembling, fully expecting that the lightest punishment which could come to him would be an instantaneous dismissal from the theatre. He was mistaken. Mr. Booth, in passing him, said simply, "You were not very clear in that scene. Try to do better another time." That was the end of the matter.

HOWARD CARROLL: 'Twelve Famous Americans,'
John Gilbert.

. . . . One of the proudest triumphs of Booth's genius was in the tent scene. From the couch where he had been writhing in the agony of his dreams, from

the terror which the palpable images of those whom he had murdered inspired, he rushed forward to the footlights, his face of the ashy hue of death, his limbs trembling, his eyes rolling and gleaming with an unearthly glare, and his whole face and form convulsed with an intense excitement. It was the very acme of acting, if such it can be called, and the deathlike silence of the audience was a higher compliment to the actor, than the long and thundering plaudits that followed the performance.

'The Actor,' *chap. II*, pp. 104-5.

Many visitors flocked to the house to see and converse with the eccentric actor. One Sunday when the parlor was filled with company, mostly religious people, who were unaccustomed to attend the theatre, but none the less desirous of witnessing the effect which he was capable of producing by his skill of elocution,—Colonel Jones asked him to read some selections for the gratification of the visitors. He yielded assent, and desired that a Bible should be brought. He was provided with one, and opening it with reverence, he chose a passage and began to read. As his impressive voice was heard, every sound was hushed, and the reading proceeded in perfect silence. The words of inspiration continued to flow from the lips of the reader, sobs were occasionally heard, and, when he had concluded, scarcely one in the room was not weeping. All testified that never before had the sublimity of the language of Holy Writ been made apparent to them, and Booth seized the opportunity to descant on the frame of mind in which the Scriptures should be approached, and to condemn

the soulless readings of those pastors who read an unwelcome task to listless hearers the awful revelations of their Maker.

CHARLES BLAKE : 'Providence Stage,' *chap. 9, pp. 188-9.*

We saw the stock actors lose their presence of mind over *Sir Giles Overreach*, in 'A New Way to Pay Old Debts,' and actually start to follow the prostrate form of the elder Booth, as he was borne, in the last scene, fainting and dying from the stage, while the audience arose and, pale with terror, leaned forward with painful interest, to see the end of what, for the moment, appeared a real catastrophe.

H. D. STONE : 'Theatrical Reminiscences,' *chap. 1, p. 10.*

The dying scene of Booth ['Richard III.'] was truly frightful—his eyes, naturally large and piercing, appeared to have greatly increased in size, and fairly gleamed with fire; large drops of perspiration oozed from his forehead, and coursing down his cheeks, mingling with and moistening the ringlets of the wig he usually wore in *Richard*, caused them to adhere to his face, rendering his appearance doubly horrible. The remarkable portrayal of the passions—the despair, hate, grief—in the passage in the original text which reads—

But the vast renown thou
Hast acquired in conquering
Richard, doth give him more,
Than the soul departing from the body, [sic]

has probably never been surpassed even by George

Frederick Cooke, whose *Richard* is said to have excelled all others.

Ibid., chap. 9, p. 57.

On our way to town we stopped at the cemetery [Greenmount, Baltimore], where the worthy son of a distinguished father has erected a beautiful and costly monument to the memory of the great actor whom he resembles. 'Tis an obelisk of polished Italian marble, on a pedestal of undressed granite, some twenty feet high, and the work of Caren, the eminent Boston sculptor. On one side are the dates of the birth and death of the tragedian, with his name in full; on another, simply the word BOOTH; on the third is a medallion head, full of character and beauty, remarkable both as a work of art and as the representation of a noble, soulful face — 'tis extremely like the profile of the son. The third side also bears this inscription :

His life was gentle; and the elements
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world — *This was a man.*

ADAM BADEAU : 'The Vagabond,' *A Night with the Booths.*

The writer's earliest recollection of her father, when she was four years of age, is seeing him upon his knees before a rough sailor who had asked alms at the door. The poor fellow had a bad wound on his leg which was suffering from neglect, and Mr. Booth brought him into the house, and washed and bandaged the injured limb with the tenderest care.

These little deeds of kindness were of almost daily occurrence. He thus sought to impress upon the

minds of his children the lessons of humanity to man and beast more by his own acts than by precept. He delighted to seek out the destitute and unfortunate, and to aid them by his sympathy as well as by his bounty.

It was on one of these errands of mercy that the horse-thief, Fontaine, *alias* Lovett, was pointed out to him. Lovett was then confined in the Louisville jail. It was remarked that he had no means of obtaining counsel, and Mr. Booth, although assured that his case was hopeless, sent him a lawyer and defrayed the expenses of his trial; for which kindness, when Lovett heard of it, he bequeathed him his skull, desiring "that it should be given after his execution to the actor Booth, with the request that he would use it on the stage in 'Hamlet,' and think, when he held it in his hands, of the gratitude his kindness had awakened."

The skull was accordingly sent to his residence while he was absent from the city, but Mrs. Booth, finding what a horrible thing had been left in her house, immediately returned it to the doctor to whom it had been intrusted for preparation and delivery. (In 1857 the doctor, who had retained the skull, sent it to Edwin Booth, who used it in the graveyard scene in 'Hamlet' on several occasions, and afterward had it buried.)

ASIA BOOTH CLARKE: 'The Elder and the Younger Booth,' *vol. i., pp. 98-9.*

In disposition he was mild and unobtrusive, yet his kindness was qualified with undeviating firmness. His idea of *home* was a sacred circle wherein few were admitted save the immediate family. In the youth of

his children everything connected with his profession was carefully avoided, as if he feared, by intercourse or allusion, to throw that glamour over its reality which might delude the senses and engender romantic desires for excitement.

For his two younger sons he had a workshop erected in the garden, and stored with lumber and the necessary tools ; thus blending pleasure with instruction, he strove to excite in their minds a love of mechanical pursuits, quoting "*Laborare est orare.*" Before leaving for California, he placed them under the careful guardianship of excellent teachers.

Prior to any anticipation of this voyage, he was erecting a handsome cottage on the farm, where he purposed to pass the summer months of every year. The building was designed in the Elizabethan style, arranged to suit his own peculiar fancy. The site selected is near the old cabin which had then for many years been occupied by the servants.

Occasionally his children were permitted to visit the theatre, but were never allowed a free indulgence of promiscuous plays. On one occasion he took every member of the family to witness Mr. Macready's *Werner*. The writer can remember only a sombre man with peculiar brows and guttural voice, dragging through what seemed to her a very dismal tragedy ; but Mr. Booth pronounced it "a most exquisite performance."

He was always a deep student, and would set himself tasks, committing them to memory like a schoolboy. Late in life he acquired the part of *Penrudduck*, and performed it perfectly ; but, failing to retain it for a future rendition, he acknowledged, almost sadly, that "time was gaining on him."

A striking peculiarity in his character was the contrast between his assumption of democracy by which he sought the level of the humblest, and encouraged even the low and vile to approach him as friends, and that innate dignity which would exalt him as a peer above the herd, and check all attempt at undue familiarity. There was an awe about him that neither his deep learning, age, nor position elicited, but which the natural demeanor of the man inspired.

One of the most beautiful qualities of his nature was *humility*, — that lowness of soul which emanates from a disregard of self, and, while elevating its possessor, causes him to appreciate in others all that is truly great and good, unaffected by the meaner passions. Perhaps it was the daily exercise of this self-abnegation that rendered him so child-like, yet so noble in the eyes of all who loved him, while, in the pursuance of his profession, it left him free from the petty malice and jealousies of an actor's life, and enabled him justly to award praise to the meritorious, and discern true worth in any grab.

All forms of religion and all temples of devotion were sacred to him, and he never failed to bare his head reverently when passing a church. He worshiped at many shrines ; he admired the 'Koran,' and in his copy of that volume many beautiful passages are underscored. Days sacred to color, ore, and metals were religiously observed by him. In the synagogues he was known as a Jew, because he conversed with rabbis and learned doctors, and joined their worship in the Hebraic tongue. He read the 'Talmud,' also, and strictly adhered to many of its laws.

Several fathers of the Roman Catholic Church recount pleasant hours spent with him in theological discourse, and aver that he was of their religion because of his knowledge of the mysteries of their faith. Of the numerous houses of worship to which he went, the one he most loved to frequent was a floating church, or "Sailor's Bethel." The congregation was of the humblest kind, and the ministry not at all edifying. The writer remembers kneeling through a lengthy impromptu prayer, which contained no spirit of piety to her childish ears ; but looking around wearily at her father, she beheld his face so earnestly inspired with devotion, that she felt rebuked, and it became pleasant to attend to that which was so devoid of interest before.

His reverence for religion was universal and deep-rooted. It was daily shown in acts of philanthropy and humane deeds, which were, however, too often misdirected. He was not a sectarian, but made many creeds his study ; and although the dogmas of the Church might have yielded him a more enduring peace, yet the tenderness of his heart, from which emanated his loving-kindness and great charity, afforded strength to his declining years.

Why then doth flesh, a bubble-glass of breath,
Hunt after honor and advancement vain,
And rear a trophy for devouring death,
With so great labor and long-lasting pain,
As if his days forever should remain ?
Sith all that in this world is great or gay,
Doth as a vapor vanish and decay.

ASIA BOOTH CLARKE : *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 112-15.

Mr. Richard Russell, who was acting as manager of the Petersburg theatre, in the absence of Mr. Caldwell, happened to hear of the appearance of a Mr. Booth in Richmond, and went to that city to ascertain who the person was, assuming that name, and came back highly pleased with the man, saying he had engaged him to play one night in Petersburg, then to finish his engagement in Richmond, and return to Petersburg for a number of nights. He had selected ‘Richard III.’ for his first appearance in Petersburg. The play was cast, and put up in the greenroom, and the night on which it was to be performed stated. On the morning of the day set apart, the large bills posted on the corners of the streets announced “the first appearance of the great tragedian, J. B. Booth, from the London theatres,—Covent Garden and Drury Lane.” The play was called for rehearsal at ten o’clock, A. M. At the proper time the rehearsal commenced, but without Mr. Booth. He had not arrived; but the manager said the rehearsal must go on, and he would have Mr. Booth’s scenes rehearsed after he arrived. I think they had reached the fourth act of the play, and I was sauntering near the head of the stairs that led up to the stage, when a small man that I took to be a well-grown boy of about sixteen years of age, came running up the stairs, wearing a roundabout jacket and a cheap straw hat, both covered with dust, and inquired for the stage-manager. I pointed across the stage to Mr. Russell, who at that moment had observed the person with whom I was conversing, and hurried toward us, and, cordially grasping the hand of the strange man, said, “Ah! Mr. Booth, I am glad you have arrived; we were fearful something serious had happened to

you." I do not think any man was ever more astonished than I was just then in beholding this meeting. Is it possible this can be the great Mr. Booth, that Mr. Russell says is "undoubtedly the best actor living?" and I began to think Russell was trying to put off some joke upon us all. I observed, however, that when the small man came upon the stage to rehearse his scenes, he was quite "at home," and showed a knowledge of the business of the character that a mere novice pretender could not have acquired. He ran through the rehearsal very carelessly, gave very few special or peculiar directions, tried the combat of the last act over twice, and said, "That will do," and the rehearsal was over. He then told Mr. Russell that he had been a few minutes too late for the stage-coach that had left Richmond early in the morning. And that he soon after started on foot, and had walked all the way,—twenty-five miles; that his wardrobe had been sent to the stage-office before he was up; had been taken by the coach, and, he supposed, was ready in the city for the proper claimant.

When the curtain rose at night, all the company were on the alert to see the supposed great actor make his entrance before the audience. When the proper scene opened, Mr. Booth walked on the stage, made no recognition of the reception applause, and, in an apparently meditative mood, began the soliloquy of "Now is the winter of our discontent," which he delivered with seeming indifference, and with little if any point, something after the manner of a school-boy repeating a lesson of which he had learned the words, but was heedless of their meaning; and then made his exit, without receiving any additional applause. I was

not where I could ascertain the impression made upon the audience, but on the stage, at the side scenes, the actors were looking at each other in all kinds of ways, expressive of astonishment and disgust. I was standing near Mr. Benton, an old actor,—the *King Henry* of the evening,—and as I turned to go away, he said, “What do you think of him, Mr. Ludlow?” “Think,” I replied, “why, I think, as I thought before, that he is an impostor! What do *you* think of him?” “Why, sir,” said Benton, “if the remainder of his *Richard* should prove like the beginning, I have never yet, I suppose, seen the character played, for it is unlike any I ever saw; it may be very good, but I don’t fancy it.” I retained my first impression of Mr. Booth until he came to the fourth act, where, in a scene with *Buckingham*, he hints at the murder of the young princes. Then I thought I discovered something worthy of a great actor. From that on, his acting was unique and wonderful. I had never seen any one produce such effects, and come so near my ideas of the character,—not even Mr. Cooke, who was as far below Mr. Booth in the last two acts as he was above him in the first three. When the curtain fell upon the finishing of the play, there was a burst of applause from the audience and actors such as I will venture to say Petersburg never knew before, nor has known since. After this one night’s performance Mr. Booth returned to Richmond, finished his engagement there, and then came again to Petersburg, and played six or eight nights to crowded and delighted audiences.

N. M. LUDLOW: ‘Dramatic Life As I Found It,’
chap. 22.

ELIZA LUCY VESTRIS.

1797-1856.

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TO MADAME VESTRIS.

If beauty has a power to charm
Or fascinate the mind,
'Tis thine, and ere it gives alarm,
Around the soul thou'rt twined.

If dimpled smiles can win the heart,
Or touch a chord of love,
'Tis thine their influence to impart,
Their potency to prove.

If sighs, enchanting in their kind,
Can cause responding sound ;
Those with thy nature are combined,
For such art thou renowned.

W. H. C., in the *Drama; or, Theatrical Magazine*,
Jan., 1822. London.



ELIZA LUCY VESTRIS
As Apollo in "Midas."

ELIZA LUCY VESTRIS.

Though play-goers of to-day are, for the most part, ignorant or forgetful of the fact, nevertheless they are largely indebted to Madame Vestris for the perfection of care and taste displayed in the mounting of modern plays. She it was who originated the much-contested idea that a drawing-room on the stage should resemble a drawing-room in real life ; and who first accustomed the public to realism of accessories. As an actress, she does not stand in the front rank ; as a manager, she worked a revolution. Unfortunately her biographers have considered her in neither of these characters ; but have devoted their energies to delineating with luxuriant fancy the eccentricities of her private life. Of what nature these eccentricities were may be gathered from the fact that one of the accounts of her life is included in a series significantly entitled ‘Amatory Biography.’

Madame Vestris’s maiden name was Bartolozzi. She was the granddaughter of the famous engraver, and the daughter of Gaetano Bartolozzi, a professor of music and fencing, from whom she probably inherited that warmth of heart which procured her the honor of a niche in ‘Amatory Biography ;’ for Signor Gaetano is said to have fled from Germany to France, and from France to England, to avoid unpleasant consequences

arising from sundry amorous adventures. He is said to have married one Mlle. Teresa, a pianist ; and the result of the union was Eliza Lucy Bartolozzi, who was born in the parish of Marylebone in January, 1797. She married, on Jan. 28, 1813, Armand Vestris, ballet-master and principal dancer at the King's Theatre ; a grandson of the great Vestris, *le dieu de la danse*. In the sixteen years which elapsed between her birth and her marriage she is represented by some imaginative writers as having been on the stage in Naples, Gibraltar, Dublin, and other places ; and as having had amours innumerable with Portuguese noblemen, English baronets, sea captains, first lieutenants, middies — but with regard to these tales a wholesome incredulity is probably the wisest course. Apparently Vestris had not intended that his wife should act ; but, owing to the extravagance of their life, she was compelled to take to the stage as a means of increasing their income. She took lessons in singing from M. Corri ; and made her début at the Italian Opera House, London, on the occasion of her husband's benefit, July 20, 1815, playing *Proserpina* in the opera of 'Il Ratto di Proserpina.' She appeared in opera with varying success in London and Paris from 1815 to 1819, and is said to have also played in some of the French legitimate theatres. During this period she either deserted her husband, or was deserted by him.

Her first appearance on the English stage was at Drury Lane, under Elliston, on Feb. 19, 1820, in the character of *Lilla*, in the opera of the 'Siege of Belgrade.' In this, and in several other parts, she was successful, but aroused no special enthusiasm until she showed herself in male attire, which she assumed

on May 30, 1820, when she played *Don Giovanni*, in the burletta of 'Giovanni in London.' The sensation she created was enormous ; and between May 30 and July 8, the last night of the season, the burletta was played twenty-nine times. During the summer she played at the Haymarket, and was, of course, exhibited in breeches. The 'Beggar's Opera' was revived for the purpose of showing her in *Captain Macheath*, and was acted twelve nights successively. It was produced at Drury Lane immediately after the opening of the winter theatres ; for many years it was one of her most popular parts, and was much in demand when special attractions were desired for a benefit. She played at Drury Lane in the winter, and at the Haymarket each summer, till the season of 1825-6, when she was engaged at Covent Garden, where her winter appearances took place until 1829-30, during which season she again played at Drury Lane. In the summer vacations she acted sometimes at the Haymarket, sometimes in the provinces. During her employment at the Patent theatres, she played most frequently in operas and burlettas, but she had also a considerable range of legitimate parts.

At the beginning of the season of 1830-1, Madame Vestris found herself without an engagement. Drury Lane had changed hands, and the new managers, Polhill and Lee, declined to re-engage her ; there was no opening for her at Covent Garden ; so she determined to have a theatre of her own. In conjunction with Maria Foote she took the Olympic Theatre in Wych Street, then one of the least inviting of speculations. Madame Vestris had it entirely cleaned and repaired, and opened it on Jan. 3, 1831, with 'Mary, Queen of

Scots,' 'Olympic Revels,' 'Little Jockey,' and 'Clarissa Harlowe.' Her own popularity was at this time unparalleled ; and she had the wisdom to surround herself with an excellent company, which included Maria Foote, Mrs. Glover, J. Vining, F. Mathews, and Liston. The result of her daring enterprise was immediate and continued success—success earned by no lucky accident, but by genius, judgment, and good taste. With it began a new era in English theatricals ; and the elegance with which modern managers stage their plays had its rise in the unfashionable little theatre in Wych Street, and its most important development in Covent Garden when Madame Vestris became ruler there. Mr. Planché was one of her warm supporters, and did much to direct the reforms in dress and in stage appointments which she instituted.

For nine seasons Mme. Vestris continued at the Olympic, and during that time produced a large number of pieces ; but, owing to the state of the law regarding minor theatres, which were only allowed to play 'burlettas,' none of the pieces were of first rate importance. Under her management her future husband, Charles James Mathews, made his first appearance, on Dec. 7, 1835. He married his fair manager on July 18, 1838, and surely never did marriage create greater sensation. Regarding it, the following conversation is reported, the speakers being Mrs. Glover, Mrs. Orger, and Mrs. Humby ; all members of the Olympic Company :

"‘They say,’ said Humby, with her quaint air of assumed simplicity, ‘that before accepting him, Vestris made a full confession to him of all her lovers ! —What touching confidence !’ she added archly.

'What needless trouble !!' said Orger, dryly.

'What a wonderful memory !!!' wound up Glover, triumphantly.'

Immediately after their marriage, they set out for America, whence they had received the tempting offer of £20,000 for one year's acting; leaving the Olympic in charge of Planché. But the American trip was a short one. The unfortunate English visitors gave offence to a section of the public in the most unconscious manner; and a certain portion of the press fomented the feeling against them so successfully that a riot was feared when they should appear. Unfortunately the New York manager, Simpson, prevented Mathews from making any explanation on the first night of his appearance, and their engagement was a failure. During their absence the Olympic had not been very prosperous; the reason being that Madame Vestris was the great attraction, and for her absence no skill in management could compensate. A brilliant season followed their return; but, as it was impossible, in a theatre so small as the Olympic, to recover the heavy losses resulting from their American visit, Mathews and his wife determined to take a lease of Covent Garden, which was offered them on very advantageous terms. Madame Vestris bade farewell to her staunch friends at the Olympic on May 31, 1839; and on Sept. 30, opened Covent Garden, with her Olympic company, playing 'Love's Labor's Lost' and the farce of 'Alive and Merry.' The bills here, and during the entire managerial career of Mathews and his wife, announce the theatre to be "under the management of Madame Vestris." Shakspere's comedy was a genuine novelty, for it had not been performed in the memory

of the oldest actor in the theatre ; it was admirably cast ; it was magnificently staged ; but it was a failure. A terrible mistake, that of trying to abolish the shilling gallery, was undoubtedly in some degree responsible for this.

Their first original production was a play by Sheridan Knowles, ‘Love,’ which was only partially successful ; and they had determined to retire from Covent Garden, when the ‘Beggar’s Opera’ saved them. It made a marvelous hit, and the remainder of the season was brilliantly successful ; one of its most interesting features being the production of Leigh Hunt’s ‘Legend of Florence.’ Their second season was notable for the production of ‘London Assurance ;’ a magnificent revival of ‘Midsummer Night’s Dream ;’ and a successful adaptation of Beaumont and Fletcher’s ‘Spanish Curate ;’ while, in their third season, they introduced to the English stage Miss Adelaide Kemble. With this season ended their management of Covent Garden. Their receipts, though great, had been swallowed up by their expenses ; money had to be borrowed at exorbitant interest ; they were continually in difficulties. Their rent had fallen into arrears, and they had to give up the theatre, their last appearance at which they made on April 30, 1842. They engaged with Macready at Drury Lane for the next season, appearing on Oct. 5 ; but they speedily quarrelled with him, and transferred their services to Benjamin Webster at the Haymarket, where they opened on Nov. 14, 1842. With Webster they remained, though with constant dissensions, till July, 1845. After “starring” in the provinces, and at some London theatres, they went into management again ;

this time at the Lyceum, which they opened on Oct. 18, 1847, with a company which included Mrs. Fitzwilliam, Mrs. Stirling, Mrs. C. Jones, Mrs. Leigh Murray, Buckstone, Harley, John Reeve, and F. Mathews. Here they were very successful for several seasons; but the burden of debt which weighed them down was too gigantic to allow them to reap any benefit from their good fortune; and their existence was a continual struggle. The health of Madame Vestris gave way, and in the season of 1854-5, a serious illness deprived Mathews of her assistance, so that he was compelled to give up the Lyceum. Shortly after, he was arrested for debt and confined in Lancaster Castle; from which he was released just in time to be present at the death-bed of his wife, who expired at Gore Lodge, Fulham, on Aug. 8, 1856.

Madame Vestris was one of the most charming of actresses. She was of medium height; her figure was simply perfect; she had a beautiful face, fine eyes, and an exquisite voice. Her looks and manners were so fascinating that George Vandenhoff, who had no liking for her, said, "No actress that we have now [1860] can give you an idea of the attractions, the fascinations, the witcheries of Madame Vestris in the heyday of her charms." She did not take high rank as an actress of legitimate comedy parts; her success in which she owed more to the charm of her personality than to her ability. But as a singing actress she was without either equal or rival. In extravaganza and in soubrettes she reigned supreme; her acting being full of archness, dash, and piquancy; while even in parts that did not suit her, she played with invariable intelligence and taste. She was not a highly

trained vocalist ; her singing, like her acting, was largely the result of natural genius, guided by artistic feeling and good judgment. In recording her death, Planché says that since that event, "no one has ever appeared possessing that peculiar combination of personal attractions and professional ability which, for so many years, made her the most popular actress and manager of her day."

As a manager her peculiar excellence has been duly noted. As a woman, it ought to be sufficient to say that, although her early life was undoubtedly of the lightest, yet Charles Mathews, in their long married life, does not seem to have faltered in his love for her; and that Planché, who knew her very intimately, never speaks of her without admiration and respect.

Many of Madame Vestris's parts were in burlettas and extravaganzas long forgotten ; but among the characters played by her may be noted : *Mrs. Page*, *Mrs. Ford*, *Oberon* ('Midsummer Night's Dream'), *Lady Teazle*, *Letitia Hardy*, *Miss Hardcastle*, *Grace Harkaway* ('London Assurance'), *Phœbe* ('Paul Pry'), *Bessie Tulip* ('Time Works Wonders'), *Katherine* ('Love'), *Sabrina* ('Comus'), *Endiga* ('Charles XII.'), *Justine* ('Rencontre'), *Captain Macheath*, *Nicolo* ('Little Devil'), *Giovanni*, *Apollo* ('Midas'), and *Paul* ('Paul and Virginia').

ROBERT W. LOWE.

DRURY LANE, Nov. 7, 1820.—This evening the 'Beggar's Opera' was performed with the novelty of Madame Vestris as *Macheath*, and a young lady *débutant* as *Polly*. To which were added the charms

of Marylebone Gardens in their pristine glory. *Macheath* was received with great applause, and as an exhibition of female versatility there was some interest in Madame V.'s adroit representation of the gay highwayman. She sang with a bold plainness not unsuitable to the dashing spirit of the robber ; and her acting was appropriate and animated. But the figure necessarily destroys the illusion, and *Macheath* is nothing more than a premature scapegrace, a sort of *Little Pickle* mounted into the dignity of boots and cravat, prating and profligacy.

European Magazine, Nov., 1820.

Madame V. is the best actress that ever sang, and decidedly the best singer that ever acted. She was born to fascinate the world, and possess a world of fascination. A man might be satisfied with the charms of her mind, could he avoid minding her charms. With talent to transcend beauty, she has beauty as transcendent as her talent. Those most ready to frame faults can find no fault with her frame. Her foot is not *half a foot*. Her eyes have all the fire of love, with yet a lovelier fire—a subduing softness, that melts while it captivates—the very pupils (unlike most *pupils*) seem to love their *lashes*. Her lips are severed cherries, imbued with their own dew ; and the commentary they form on Horn's song of "Cherry Ripe" gave to that song its popularity. Her ear seems revelling in her ringlets, as though it loved the curls it reposed upon. She is so *peer-less*, you cannot *laud* her. She will never grow old ; for Time that flies with others, stands to gaze at her ; *his wings* are idle, while he is loitering at *hers*.

She has wit enough to excuse severity, yet good-nature enough to check her wit.

Madame V. as a singer *follows* no school, she has *formed* one—a school in which the heart breathes music through the lips. In her own garb she is the *beau-ideal* of woman; in male attire she is indeed an *ideal beau*—the personification of Ganymede or Adonis in their *juvenilia*. She makes love like an angel—Moore caught his notion of the ‘Loves of the Angels’ from her. As an actress she imitates no one; and (though many attempt) no one has succeeded in imitating her, for she is inimitable. Her laugh is sunshine to the eye, and music to the ear. She dances as if she did not belong to this world, and walks as if this world belonged to her. As a manageress she is the *leader* (and Jove’s *Leda* was nothing to her); but who is to follow her footsteps?

The Tatler, London, March, 1832.

An offer of great pecuniary benefit was tendered to her, if she would consent to visit America. She said she would not go alone (and she was right). Would Mr. Price engage her pupil, Mr. Charles Mathews? Aware of the morality (real or assumed) of his trans-atlantic brothers and sisters,—although Mr. Price did not always *privately* adhere to its code, he was obliged publicly to appear to do so; and therefore his answer was, “If you go out together, you must get married.” “*Married!*” was the exclamation of the astonished pair. “Yes,” added the American manager; “and the ceremony must take place publicly here, and be verified by the London newspapers.” The widow turned her smiling eyes upon the young actor,—could

any man resist their power? But when she added to the smile the tear of real affection, which for a moment dimmed its lustre, the future bridegroom's fate was sealed, and Madame Vestris became Mrs. Charles Mathews.

MRS. C. BARON WILSON: 'Our Actresses,' vol. ii., pp. 212-13.

She was when Mathews married her already in the "sere," with a good deal of the yellow leaf visible; that is, when the *blanc* and *rouge* were off, and allowed the native hue and color of her cheeks to be seen. She had run through a great variety of fortunes; principally those of foolish young lords, fast young guardsmen, and some hoary old sinners; she was the Ninon de l' Enclos of her day, less the piquancy and *delicatesse d'esprit* of the French Laïs; she was accomplished though ignorant (a duplex effect defective, by no means uncommon on the stage, or off it either). . . . Now Vestris was admirably gifted, cut out, and framed to shine *en petit maître*; she was remarkable for the symmetry of her limbs, especially of those principally called on to fill these parts; she had a fearless off-hand manner, and a fine *mezzo-soprano* voice. . . . She was the best *soubrette chantante* of her day; self-possession, archness, grace, *coquetterie*, seemed natural to her; these, with her charming voice, excellent taste in music, fine eyes, and exquisite form, made her the most fascinating and (joined to her *esprit d'intrigue*) the most dangerous actress of her time.

GEORGE VANDENHOFF: 'Leaves from An Actor's Note Book,' pp. 4-5.

Without entering into any defence of the faults of Mrs. Charles Mathews, to her the American theatres are indebted for the improvement so apparent in the arrangement of the stage, carpets, ottomans, grates, fenders, centre-tables, etc., in drawingrooms ; gravel-walks, beds of flowers, hothouse plants in gardens are all her work. Among the number of ladies who have attempted the difficult task of managing a theatre, she alone has succeeded. Look at the perfect manner in which the light pieces were produced at the Olympic Theatre in London. Everything requisite to complete the illusion of the scene was there—and she insisted as a *sine qua non* with the American managers, that they should be here also. For this alone she deserves the gratitude as well as admiration of every visitor of the play-house.

'Actors As They Are,' New York, 1856.

In petticoats our heroine shines most when the part is one of a boisterous nature ; her *Juliana* in the 'Honeymoon' is a fine display of ability. In the dance when the farmer says—"I always kiss when I like," and she retorts with "and so do I," her significant look always calls down thunders of applause : and the air with which she utters "Duke or no Duke, I will be a Duchess !" is a superlative specimen of the proud, petulant and disappointed minx. We are among those who admire her most in her natural dress ; if she be really partial to broad characters, her *Miss Hoyden* is a perfect delineation of vulgar simplicity, and she has given most excellent effect to *Nell* in the 'Devil to Pay.' These and such parts, though rude and boisterous, are not inconsistent with her sex

and female propriety ; and one of the prettiest pieces of acting ever seen, is her *Cowslip*, in the 'Agreeable Surprise.' Her voice is a sweet tenor, and has no superior since Miss Tree left the stage ; she uses no flourishes, no falsetto tones, and possesses one qualification rarely found in modern singers who have formed their taste upon the Italian school. Her voice is not all musical tones ; you can distinguish the words, and comprehend the meaning of what she is singing. If we take Madame Vestris all in all she is a most valuable actress, and possesses more universal talent than any comic lady we know. Wanting personal charms, our heroine would never have advanced higher than the reach of a third-rate actress ; with them she has risen to be the first low comic actress on the London boards. And in no one instance will he ever feel disgusted, or inclined to breathe a hiss at anything she does, serious, humorous or ridiculous. No one can see her without being instantly pre-possessed in her favor ; her appearance steals away the understanding before she opens her seductive lips, and enchant's you with heavenly sounds. Her vocal powers require not any notice ; all admit them to be delightful ; and as long as *cherries ripen* with the summer, will her reputation as an English songstress live in musical fame.

'Life of Madame Vestris,' London, 1839, pp. 56, 57.

The writer recollects being present at the Olympic on an occasion when some people in a private box greatly annoyed the audience by loud talking. The annoyance went on all through the first piece, and was continued in the second, in which the manageress

herself performed. Vestris was evidently angry ; at last she came forward to sing a ballad—the interruption was at its height, when during the first verse of the song, Vestris stopped short, and as had probably been arranged, the orchestra stopped at the same moment, so that nothing could be heard but the loud talking from the ill-behaved people in the box. A torrent of hisses soon quieted them, and it would seem made them ashamed of themselves, for, at the end of the piece, a bouquet was thrown from that box at Vestris' feet. She did not pick it up, and when the curtain fell, there it lay near the footlights ; it was pulled in contemptuously, by means of a broom thrust from beneath the curtain, and returned to the donors.

J. M. LANGFORD : 'Era Almanack,' 1870, p. 72.

HENRY PLACIDE.

1799—1870.

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Upon this stage thirteen brief years ago,
Flushed with the hopes that ardent bosoms know,
A youth appeared ; nor friends nor loud acclaim
Ushered him forth. Unheralded by fame
He came among us with a taste refined,
A vivid fancy and a burning mind—
Nature his model, counselor, and guide,
The goddess found him ever at her side,—
All her instructions he instinctive caught
And ne'er “o'erstepped her modesty” in aught,
Until the wreath for which he strove was won,
And gay Thalia crowned her favorite son !
'Twas then the public with admiring eyes
Saw a new star in *placid* beauty rise,
And take its place, transcendent and alone
The brightest jewel in the mimic zone !

GEORGE P. MORRIS.



HENRY PLACIDE
As Polonius in "Hamlet."

HENRY PLACIDE.

Henry Placide, the most chaste and finished general comedian of native birth known to the American stage, and a worthy peer of the most distinguished foreign actors, was born at Charleston, South Carolina, on Sept. 8, 1799. His father, Alexander Placide, French by birth, was an eminent gymnast and rope-dancer, and with his first wife—an accomplished *danseuse* and pantomimist—first appeared at the John Street Theatre, New York, Feb. 3, 1792. After her death, and while manager of the Charleston Theatre, he married a daughter of Mrs. Wrighten, the famous English comic vocalist, known in America as Mrs. Pownall. By this lady he had several children, who, as soon as they could walk and talk, were brought before the public; and as they inherited much of the saltatory, musical and histrionic proclivities of their parents, their early training produced the happiest professional results, especially in the cases of Henry and his elder sister, Caroline, who as Mrs. W. R. Blake, became nearly as good a general performer as her brother.

In 1807 the Placide family appeared at the Park Theatre, New York, in a series of ballet-pantomimes, some of which were performed exclusively by children, among whom was doubtless the youthful Henry, although his name is not found recorded on any

play-bill, until Aug. 23, 1808, when it stands as the personator of *Old Thomas* in a ballet entitled the 'Wood-cutter,' performed by children at the Augusta (Georgia) Theatre. In October of the same year, he is there announced as *Florio*, in the 'Hunter of the Alps,' and *David*, in the 'Blind Bargain.' At the theatre in Richmond, Virginia, Dec. 21, 1810, Master Placide is advertised to give, by particular desire, imitations of Master Payne as *Rolla* and *Douglas*. His juvenile efforts soon attracted public notice, and after a long apprenticeship in Southern theatrical circuits, his merit reached the ears of Northern managers, and on Sept. 2, 1823, he made his reappearance at the Park Theatre in the characters of *Zekiel Homespun*, the Yorkshireman, in the 'Heir at Law,' and *Dr. Dablan-cœur*, the French physician, in the 'Budget of Blunders,' in each of which he was triumphantly successful.

Generously endowed by nature with every personal requisite for his art—a figure of full medium height, a voice powerful and melodious, a dark-eyed, handsome face, enriched in early and middle life with the greatest flexibility of feature and the most variable expression; with unfailing spirit and vivacity, habits of temperance and industry, and powers of observation rarely equalled, Mr. Placide was one of the most careful students of character and life, and his representations of nature were judiciously heightened in color only enough to produce the requisite effect in scenes where all around was artificial. His perfect familiarity with the French language gave him an immense advantage over almost every competitor in characters like *Dr. Caius*, or *Jean Jacques Frisacque*,

while his seemingly intuitive knowledge of music, combined with a pure and full-toned baritone voice, rendered him one of the most valuable of operatic assistants, as his *Baron Pumpolino*, *Dr. Dulcamara*, *Lord Allcash*, and numerous other parts in English operatic adaptations, abundantly testified.

Although never indulging in grimace or buffoonery, his powers were happily adapted to almost every grade of comedy or farce, and were so diverse in their nature that a stranger could scarcely believe that the foppish representative of the fastidious niceties of *Sir Harcourt Courtly* was identical in person with the stupid *Fathom* of the previous night; or that the *Farmer Ashfield* or *Dogberry* of the play, could possibly be transformed into the *Lingo* or *Grandfather Whitehead* of the afterpiece. Yet his very person seemed to change with the character he portrayed, and to contract or expand with the age or station in which it was cast—in one piece sturdy, hale, hearty, and exuberant; in others, shrunken and withered by age, or reduced to mere overgrown boyishness. His *Frederick the Great* was an example of one class, his *Master Tom Dobbs*, and the *Fat Boy* in ‘*Pickwick*,’ were prominent in another. In voice only was he to be recognized; and modulate or subdue his clear ringing tones as best he might, his articulation was always so perfect, and his enunciation so crisp and distinct, that to a familiar ear he was sure to betray himself.

Mr. Placide continued in the stock company of the Park for more than twenty years, becoming the unrivalled representative of *Lord Ogleby*, *Sir Peter Teazle*, *Sir Anthony Absolute* and similar characters, and making his last appearance as one of its regular members

on Nov. 2, 1843, as *Captain Taradiddle*, in 'What Will the World Say,' and *Grandfather Whitehead*, although he frequently after fulfilled, limited starring engagements there.

During his first season, his salary was twenty dollars a week ; it was raised in a year or two to twenty-five, and ultimately to thirty dollars a week, at a time when his coadjutors, Messrs. Hilson and Barnes, forming with him the finest comic trio ever known on the New York stage, who each had been receiving fifty dollars a week, were notified that their salaries would be reduced. This finally caused their secession from the company and his accession to their most important characters. He had been promised the highest rate ever paid by the management, but never received it until he played for brief limited periods, although he was generally fortunate enough to receive profitable benefits semi-annually ; for he was ever one of the first favorites of the town, not only by reason of his merit, but because of his modesty and his willingness to oblige the management, in any unexpected emergency.

From 1843 until within a few years of his death, when partial blindness overtook him, he played star engagements throughout the Union and at the leading theatres of New York, being always sure of a hearty reception. His last appearances were at the Winter Garden, New York, commencing in an original piece entitled 'Corporal Cartouche,' in which he represented the titular character, March 25, 1865. It met with decided success, but its run, as well as the engagement of Mr. Placide, was interrupted by the death of President Lincoln. On the resumption of performances it was

repeated a few times, but he terminated his engagement with his final appearance on the New York stage, May 13, 1865, in the characters of *Havresack*, in 'Napoleon's Old Guard,' and *Michael Perrin*, in the 'Secret Service,' in which he had long been especially admired. His list of characters on the Park stage outnumbered five hundred, and he was the original representative there of more than two hundred. Soon after his retirement from that theatre, Mr. Placide took up his residence at Babylon, Long Island, where he became an object of affectionate interest and regard to the entire community, and enjoyed its perfect respect. If not a member of the Episcopal Church, he was for many years a regular attendant on its services. His death occurred after a long illness, on Jan. 23, 1870, in the 71st year of his age. His funeral services were performed in St. Paul's Church, in the city of New York. He left a handsome competence to his widow and adopted daughter, and bestowed generous legacies on his sisters, Mrs. Blake and Mrs. Mann, as well as on their children, Dr. Lewis Blake, Mrs. Jas. W. Wallack, Jr., and Miss Alice Placide Mann.

JOSEPH NORTON IRELAND.

Henry Placide was one of the best comedians this country has ever known.

H. P. PHELPS: 'Players of a Century,' chap. xx., 1848.

Mr. Henry Placide was also introduced to a New York audience during this season [1823-4]; a gentleman whom I have no hesitation in placing at the head

of the American stage. As a native actor decidedly the best comedian the United States has yet produced. There is a finish about all he undertakes which reminds a foreigner of Farren, to whom he may be compared.

F. C. WEMYSS : 'Twenty-six Years of the Life of an Actor,' vol. i., chap. 10.

Mr. Placide was very fine in poor *Flutter* ['Belle's Stratagem']. We cannot praise many of the male actors on our boards with so willing a heart as we do Placide. There is an intelligence about him that is sure to please. He performs in a style entirely original, and well calculated to lead him to eminence.

New York Mirror, April 9, 1825.

Placide made a most glorious *Don Ferolo Whisker-andos* [Critic]. His burlesque imitation of Kean's manner of dying was extremely ludicrous.

Ibid., Nov. 25, 1826.

This gentleman seems to hold to the maxim that whatever is worth doing is worth doing well. With pleasure we have witnessed the rapid strides he has lately made in his profession, and think there is that sterling talent about him which will eventually place him at its head. To a correct and happy conception of character he unites a felicitous execution, and in many parts exhibits a fund of rich, broad, unconscious humor, without the least admixture of buffoonery or grimace. His *Gravedigger* in 'Hamlet' is an admirable piece of acting.

Ibid., Dec. 9, 1826.

Four or five years ago, Placide's abilities were but little known. He had risen from the lowest walks of the drama, and, as is common in such cases, the admiration of the audience did not keep pace with his increasing merit. They were slow to believe that one whom they had long been in the habit of regarding as not above mediocrity, could ever attain excellence ; and strangers were often astonished at the slight estimation in which he was held. This is human nature ; we are unwilling to give up early impressions, or retract expressed opinions. Had a strange actor of equal merits and some reputation, appeared before the same audience, he would instantly have become an object of unmixed admiration. This, however, could not last, and the unequivocal ability displayed by Placide in some parts *commanded* praise — praise attracted attention, and that was all that was wanted. Since that time he has steadily and rapidly advanced in public estimation — he has never once receded, and his course is still onward.

To speak of Placide apart from the character he represents is difficult. We know that there are a string of set phrases going the rounds of the press, concerning actors "identifying themselves with the part they play," and "losing themselves in the character they represent," etc., and, in some sense, this is true, seeing that they frequently lose themselves, the character, the author, and the audience ; but in reality, there is not one man in a thousand who possesses the gift of making the audience forget the actor in the part. Even in Kean it was sometimes wanting. It is the highest kind of praise ; and as it appears to be fast becoming a settled rule, that all praise, to be

worth the having, must be in the superlative, a quality that is peculiar to the few has been awarded without scruple to the million. Indeed, so very loosely and indiscriminately are these phrases applied, that we should not be surprised to see one of them tacked to a commendation of Barnes, who seldom or never "identifies" himself with anything, but simply plays Barnes, let him appear in what he will ; and so amusing and successful is he in that character, that he cannot do better than stick to it. But Placide has in truth the faculty of appearing to be the character he assumes ; and we would instance as a strong proof of the soundness of this assertion, that of all the imitations of celebrated actors that have been given in this city, not one has been attempted of Placide. And why is this ? For the simple reason that he has no peculiarities common to *all* his characters, and the imitation would not be recognized unless the audience had seen him in the part imitated. Not so with many — Barnes, for instance. Let a good imitation of him be given in *any* character, and though nine-tenths of the audience have never seen him in that peculiar character, the general resemblance will be instantly appreciated.

In articles like the present, which must of necessity be brief, it would be impossible to enter into a minute examination of the various excellencies of Mr. Placide in the wide range of parts in which he appears. There are three distinct classes in which he is without an equal, namely, old men, or rather middle-aged gentlemen, drunken servants, and kind-hearted, simple country lads. As a sample of the three we would instance the *Marquis* in the 'Cabinet,' *Antonio* in the

'Marriage of Figaro,' and *Zekiel Homespun* in the 'Heir at Law.' In the last he would probably be successful either at Drury Lane or Covent Garden. His *Lord Ogleby* we did not so much admire ; it was a creditable performance, but rather stiff and with scarcely enough of the coxcomb, and appeared what he himself termed it, an attempt. Upon the whole, he is a fine—almost a faultless actor, with a rich natural vein of humor, free from the alloy of buffoonery. There are only two things of his which we remember without pleasure, namely, a portion of his *Peter* in 'Romeo and Juliet,' and an ill-judged attempt to give a ludicrous expression to the word "bubble" in the caldron scene in 'Macbeth,' while enacting one of the witches. The sinful deed was certainly committed by one of the beldams, and we unwillingly thought by Placide. If it were not, we ask his pardon; if it were, he may be assured of one thing—that though deservedly a great favorite with the public, Shakspere is still a greater.

Ibid., June 20, 1829.

In the 'Rent Day,' however, Wallack is not the only and scarcely the prominent feature. Placide is just as good, in his way. The latter gentleman always improves. We like him every time better than the last. He is truly a chaste and invaluable performer, and we proudly claim him as a countryman—shining with an equal light among so many brilliant specimens of transatlantic talent.

Ibid., Sept. 22, 1832.

I have seen Liston and Farren, both distinguished

for their talents, and both deservedly admired. Yet I have seen nothing to alter the opinion which you know I have long entertained, that Henry Placide is the best actor on the stage in his own diversified range.

EDWIN FORREST : Letter from London, 1835. Alger's 'Life of Forrest,' vol. i., chap. x., p. 282.

I made my first appearance at the Park Theatre, on Wednesday, Sept. 21, 1842, in 'Hamlet ;' Mr. Placide, the best *Polonius* and the best actor in his varied line in the country, was the *Polonius*.

GEORGE VANDENHOFF : 'Leaves from An Actor's Note Book,' chap. xii., p. 191.

Henry Placide enjoyed in public estimation a fame worthy and well deserved. He was an actor of the old school, and his conceptions were the fruit of appreciative and careful study ; his acting was a lucid and harmonious interpretation of his author ; and his elocution, clear and resonant, was the speech of a scholar and a gentleman. The artistic sense was never forgotten in his delineations, and his name on the bills was a guarantee of intellectual pleasure. He was not broadly funny like Burton, or Holland ; but those who remember his *Sir Harcourt Courtly*, his *Jean Jacques François Antoine Hypolite de Frisac* in 'Paris and London,' and his *Clown* in Shakspere's 'Twelfth Night,' will not deny that he was the owner of a rich vein of eccentric humor, and that he worked his possession effectually. He was an expert in the Gallic parts where the speech is a struggle between French and English, and, indeed, since his departure they,

too, have vanished from the stage. But those who saw him as *Havresack* in the 'Old Guard,' as the *Tutor* in 'To Parents and Guardians,' or as *Monsieur Dufard* in the 'First Night,' will bear witness to his inimitable manner and to his facile blending of the grave and gay. We shall never forget how, in the last named character (*Mons. Dufard*) having engaged his daughter for a "first appearance," and having declared his own ability to manage the drum in the orchestra on the occasion, he, suddenly during the mimic rehearsal, at an allusion in the text to sunrise, stamped violently on the stage ; and to the startled manager's exclamation, "What's that ?" serenely replied, "Zat is ze cannon which announce ze break of day—I play him on ze big drum in ze night." In choleric old men Placide was unsurpassed. All the touches that go toward the creation of a grim, irascible, thwarted, bluff old gentleman he commanded at will. His *Colonel Hardy* in 'Paul Pry,' for instance, what an example was that ! I hear him now, at the close of the comedy, when things had drifted to a happy anchorage—hear him saying in reply to the soothing remark—"Why, Colonel, you've everything your own way."—"Yes, I know I have everything my own way ; but —— it, I haven't my own way in having it !" His repertory covered a wide range ; and we retain vivid recollections of his *Sir Peter Teazle*, his *Doctor Ollapod* and his *Silky*; the last in the 'Road to Ruin'—in which comedy, by the way, we remember seeing Placide, Blake, Burton, Lester [Wallack], Bland, and Mrs. Hughes ; truly a phenomenal cast. Such, briefly sketched, was the actor who constituted one of Burton's strongest pillars. For some years he played at no other theatre in New

York. He gave enjoyment to thousands, and in dramatic annals his name and achievements have distinguished and honorable record.

W.M. L. KEESE : 'Life of Burton,' pp. 48-51.

Let us not forget Harry Placide, that glorious old actor, now on the Long Island shore, who consents to forget in sea-side sports his early triumphs and a long-admiring public. I wish he would occasionally revisit the glimpses of the footlights, just to remind us how *Sir Peter Teazle* or *Sir Harcourt Courtly* ought to be acted. With him, probably, will pass away even the tradition of those parts. In his *Sir Peter* was exhibited a consummate art of which the more modern stage gives us but few examples. It was the ideal of an English gentleman of the olden time. When Placide and Gilbert are gone, Sheridan will have to be shelved.

'Some of our Actors,' *Galaxy*, Feb., 1868.

JAMES H. HACKETT.

1800—1871.

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As Yankee, Hackett first appealed to fame ;
Then Gallic parts essayed, till *Dromio* came.
The last was symptom of another birth,
Which found development in *Falstaff's* girth.
He could no further go—the rage of *Lear*,
The darkly-frowning *Richard*, vanished here.
Lost in the fat Knight's humorous embrace,
The tragic mask forgot to show its face ;
And when hereafter Hackett's name we call,
'Twill be as *Falstaff*, first and best of all.

WILLIAM L. KEESE.



JAMES H. HACKETT
As Falstaff in "King Henry IV."

JAMES H. HACKETT.

James Henry Hackett, one of the favorite and most highly distinguished of American comedians, was born in the city of New York, on March 15, 1800.

His grandfather, Edmund Hackett, a collateral heir to an Irish barony, settled in Amsterdam, where he married a daughter of the Baron de Massau. A son, Thomas G. Hackett, was there born to him, who for a number of years held a lieutenant's commission in the Life Guards of the Prince of Orange, which he resigned in consequence of declining health in 1794, when he emigrated to America. In 1799, he married the daughter of the Rev. Abraham Keteltas of Jamaica, Long Island, and settled in the city of New York, where he died suddenly in 1803. His widow, with her son of three years, the subject of our sketch, returned to Jamaica, in which village the lad received a good English education and acquired the rudiments of Latin and Greek.

In the Autumn of 1815, he was admitted as a student at Columbia College, where his classical studies were retarded by a severe and protracted illness. After his recovery, he did not resume them, but commenced at once the study of the law, a pursuit that proved by no means congenial to his disposition; and in 1817 he entered the counting-house of one of his relatives, to be initiated into the mysteries of commerce.

Possessing acute observation and strong powers of mimicry, his imitations of theatrical favorites, and the oddities of peculiar individuals, had even at this early period, afforded great amusement to his circle of personal associates.

In 1819, Mr. Hackett married, and took from the stage, Miss Catherine Lee Sugg, then a popular actress and vocalist, and removed to the village of Utica, in the State of New York, where he successfully engaged in trade until 1825, when he ambitiously returned to the city, and was soon after numbered among the many bankrupt merchants whose misfortunes made that period one of universal gloom and despondence.

This disastrous circumstance caused his wife's return to the stage, where she was received with enthusiasm; and to her *Rosetta* in the opera of 'Love in a Village,' Mr. Hackett made his first public theatrical attempt at the Park Theatre, New York, in the character of *Justice Woodcock*, on March 1, 1826, when from nervousness and loss of self-possession, he was far from being successful. Another opportunity offered on the occasion of Mrs. Hackett's benefit, March 10, and he then undertook the part of *Sylvester Daggerwood*, in which he gave some admirable imitations of Kean, Mathews, Hilson and Barnes, and was rewarded with loud expressions of approbation. This fixed his resolution, and he determined on adopting the stage as a profession.

In the following June, he made his third appearance, introducing the original Yankee story of 'Jonathan and Uncle Ben' with so perfect an imitation of the idiom, tone, and accent of that peculiar dialect,

that he literally convulsed the house with laughter. He also personated *Morbleau*, in 'Mons. Tonson' with great effect, and the character long remained a favorite with him and with the public.

He appeared several times during the next season, and in October, 1826, made a tremendous hit as one of the *Dromios* in the 'Comedy of Errors,' his imitation of the voice and mannerisms of Mr. Barnes, as his twin-brother, being so perfect as to confound the audience with regard to their respective identities, and to elicit the most overwhelming applause. This performance was repeated many times, and in December Mr. Hackett took a farewell benefit with the personation of *Richard III.*, in the closest imitation of the elder Kean. He soon after sailed for England, and at Covent Garden in April, 1827, essayed to amuse a London audience with his Yankee stories, and his clever imitations of Macready and Kean, which latter were commended by the critics, but failed to prove attractive to the public.

Returning to America, and still hesitating between wooing the comic or the tragic muse, Mr. Hackett made his reappearance at the Park Theatre, as *Richard III.*, on Sept. 5, and as *Dromio* on the 7th, to find that the latter character was far more highly appreciated. To introduce his imitations of Mr. Barnes in a newer form, he soon after, for the latter's benefit, appeared in the farce of the 'Two Sosias,' (reduced from Dryden's old comedy of 'Amphytrion') as *Mercury*, who assumes also the character of *Sosia*, represented by the beneficiary. The attempt was successful, but did not interfere with the popularity of the two *Dromios*, who continued to appear nearly every

season, until the death of Mr. Barnes in 1841. During the season of 1827-8, Mr. Hackett also appeared as *Othello*, *Iago*, *Gloster* in 'Jane Shore,' *Paris* in the 'Roman Actor' in his defense of the stage, *Montmorency* in the 'Hundred Pound Note,' *Tristram Fickle* in the 'Weathercock' (two light comedy parts), and on May 13, 1828,* as *Sir John Falstaff* in 'King Henry IV.', which representation then probably did not intimate the subsequent triumphant success it afterwards achieved.

On Dec. 3, 1828, Mr. Hackett produced, for his wife's benefit, his alteration of Colman's comedy 'Who Wants a Guinea?' re-named 'Jonathan in England,' in which he personated *Solomon Swop*, a Yankee substitute for the expunged character of *Solomon Gundy*. This was very favorably received, and repeated for his own benefit, when he also appeared as *Sir Archy Mac-Sarcasm*, the Scotchman, in the farce of 'Love à la Mode,' his third attempt in a different dialect. Although *Solomon Swop* was not the first Yankee character introduced to the stage, having been preceded by *Jonathan Ploughboy* in Woodworth's comedy of the 'Forest Rose,' originally personated by Alexander Simpson, and by a character in Royal Tyler's comedy of the 'Contrast,' even as early as 1787, it was the first which established the reputation of an actor in that line, and in connection with his *Dromio*, at once raised Mr. Hackett to the position of a star whose engagements throughout the country proved always

* Mr. Hackett, in his Autobiography, does not acknowledge the performance of the character until May 31, 1832, when at Philadelphia, at the request and for the benefit of Mr. Charles Kean, he personated it with the latter's *Hottsuur*.

attractive and highly lucrative. His great facility in acquiring and delivering the peculiar mannerisms and idioms of different nationalities soon made him the most renowned dialect actor of his time ; and his accurate representation of the Kentuckian, *Nimrod Wild-fire*, and the quasi-Dutchman, *Rip Van Winkle*, which he first played in April, 1830, added greatly to his fame.

At different times, Mr. Hackett undertook management in New York, once at the Chatham Garden Theatre in 1829, once at the Bowery in 1830, and once at the National Theatre (Italian Opera House), in 1837, but met with very little success at any of these places. He was also the manager of Mr. Macready at the Astor Place Opera House, at the time of the disgraceful riot there in 1849—and he brought out Madame Grisi and Signor Mario at Castle Garden in 1854 with ultimate pecuniary success. Notwithstanding his managerial disappointments, he early acquired a fortune,—or what in his day was considered one—and to his honor it is recorded that the first fruits of his labors were devoted to paying off his debts incurred while in trade.

Mr. Hackett several times visited England professionally, and his *Falstaff*, in whose representation he took the greatest pride, was there acknowledged, after the death of Dowton, to be the only successful one known to its stage, while in America no one could assume to be his rival.

Mr. Hackett was a born comedian, but being a thorough Shaksperean scholar, he had a perpetual hankering after the honors of tragedy, and in 1840, at the Park Theatre, New York, played *Lear* three times,

and *Hamlet* once or twice, more to the satisfaction of himself than of the public.

In early life he possessed remarkably handsome and very expressive features, and his cultivated mind and refined manners brought him into close intercourse with the most accomplished critics and highest social circles both in England and America.

Mr. Hackett died at his residence in Jamaica, Dec. 28, 1871, from the effects of a heavy cold combined with dropsical infirmities, leaving, with other children, a son — the Hon. John K. Hackett, for many years Recorder of the City of New York.

JOSEPH NORTON IRELAND

There are three distinct species of clown in our country, the descendants of English, Low Dutch, and German emigrants. In all of these Mr. Hackett is true and original. In that compound monster which is found on our Western frontiers, we are told he has been as successful in the representation, as Mr. Paulding has been in the sketching. Mr. Hackett's success has been proportionate to the enterprise and observation he has evinced. He has been from his début a star. Without regular training, or the toil of *working up* in a company of comedians, he has seized the crown at a leap, and may say with *Richard*—"I am myself alone!"

WM. DUNLAP: 'History of the American Theatre,'
Conclusion.

The acting drama of these times, fairly set forth, would also introduce that distinguished American,

James Hackett, whose *Falstaff* has been the theme of applause from even the lips of fastidious critics, and whose Yankee characters have stamped his powers with the bold impress of originality. Moreover, Hackett, in his correspondence on 'Hamlet' with that able scholar, John Quincy Adams, has given us proofs that he had trained himself in a deep study of the philosophy of Shakspere.

DR. FRANCIS: 'Old New York,' pp. 214-15.

Hackett is an admirable actor. His *Sir Pertinax MacSycophant*, in the 'Man of the World,' is a perfect study, and exhibits a Scotchman of the world in colors supremely vivid. His *Rip Van Winkle* is far nearer the ordinary conception of that good-for-nothing Dutchman than Mr. Jefferson's, whose performance is praised so much for its naturalness.

'Some of Our Actors,' *Galaxy*, Feb., 1868.

A few months after [1826], James H. Hackett, having been unfortunate in business, adopted the stage as a profession ; and, influenced partly perhaps by the recent production of the 'Forest Rose,' and partly by the great success he had achieved in the telling of a Yankee story, he determined to devote himself in a measure to the acting of Yankee parts, which served also as an excellent foil to his broken-French characters, and gave him occasion for showing that versatility of which every actor seeks to give proof. Success attended his efforts, and Hackett was for many years one of the most prominent figures on our stage. Nor was his acting confined to this country ; he was one of the first of American actors to go to England,

seeking success in the land which had hitherto provided America with most of its actors and actresses, and which was rather surprised at receiving anything in return.

Hackett's first success as an actor of Yankee parts was in 1828, in his own alteration of the farce by George Colman the younger, 'Who Wants a Guinea?' into 'Jonathan in England,' in which the original British *Solomon Gundy* is changed into an American *Solomon Swop*,—a rather high-handed conversion, which greatly excited Colman's ire when, as Examiner of Plays, he was called upon to license for performance in London this perversion of his own handiwork. Five or six years later, Hackett repeated the attempt, playing *Paul Pry* in Yankee dialect!—surely one of the most curious experiments in the history of the drama. He did not, however, confine himself to these alterations, but sought diligently for wholly original American parts; and, after two or three ventures, he made a great success, in 1831, as *Colonel Nimrod Wildfire*, in a comedy called the 'Lion of the West,' written for him by one of the foremost figures in our literature then, although now well-nigh forgotten—James K. Paulding. The part suited him so well that when in England afterward, he had a sequel to it written by Bayle Bernard, called the 'Kentuckian,' in which he, of course, appeared as *Colonel Nimrod*.

The 'Forest Rose' and Hackett's *Solomon Swop* revealed the theatrical possibilities of the Yankee character, and when Hackett went to England, in 1833, other actors were prompt to seize the occasion.

BRANDER MATTHEWS: *Scribner's Magazine*, July, 1879.

Mr. Hackett closed his engagements in America, and took his farewell benefit at this house [Park Theatre] last week. He was honored by the attendance and enthusiastic applause of a numerous audience. The entertainments of the evening were 'Jonathan in England,' altered for him from the play of 'Who Wants a Guinea?' and 'Nimrod Wildfire,' a piece which always fills the house, and elicits hearty plaudits. Mr. Hackett's *Jonathan Swop* is a rare and rich performance. It is new, fresh from life, full of humor. If they do not like it on the other side of the water, it will be because they do not understand its fidelity to nature. We have seen nothing for many a day more ludicrous and yet more correct than his reply to the first question asked him after his entrance: "Well, what have you been about?" His pause, look and tone in answer, "What have I been about?" convulsed the house with laughter. We can only cheer this gentleman with the assurance, that whether or not he succeed in England, his reputation here is established; and a failure there, so long as he adhere to the sphere for which he is so happily qualified, must only render his welcome back among us more certain and enthusiastic.

New York Mirror, Oct. 13, 1832.

This was Mr. Hackett's first appearance before the Mobile public [1835], and they were highly pleased with his various performances. He was certainly an uncommonly clever actor at that time, considering the wide range of characters that he assumed. . . . I never enjoyed any performance of the comic kind more than I did his *Major Joe Bunker*. He was

equally good in the old Frenchman, *Mons. Morbleau*.

N. M. LUDLOW: 'Dramatic Life As I Found It,'
chap. 41.

Mr. Hackett's ideal of *Sir John Falstaff* is not ours. We take him to be the fat gross man in all conceivable respects. Mr. Hackett is the bon vivant, whose more objectionable characteristics are all put on with his red and buff dress, russet boots and feathered cap. This refined conception is not so manifest to those of the contrary idea, like ourselves, in 'Henry the Fourth,' as in the 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' for a reason already assigned—the unmitigated grossness and sensuality of the old knight in the latter. Had *Falstaff* to say, in any of his scenes, twenty times what we understand him to say twice or thrice, in three plays, we might credit Mr. Hackett's conception as the best and award him the utmost of our applause. We know that other actors of reputation, American and English (Mr. Burton among them), in their representation of *Falstaff* carry out Mr. Hackett's idea. We have seen them all; but, however masterly out of that character they have shown themselves, they do not realize our preconceptions in it. We never knew but one man who did. That was old William Dowton. As Rachel has made the character of *Adrienne Lecouvreur* hers, as Kean made that of *Shylock* his, so did our dear departed old friend become the *Falstaff* of the stage.

'Actors As They Are,' New York, 1856.

BENJAMIN WEBSTER.

1798-1882.

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Open gates of recollection to the long remembered
years
When his *Graves* excited laughter and his *Triplet*
moved to tears !
He had humor, he had sparkle, there was cynicism's
bite
When he soothed and he soft-sawdered as the oily
Hypocrite.
Nature school'd him for an Actor, and "one touch"
of it he show'd
When the copyist *Penn Holder* led to sympathy the
road ;
For the old man clasped his daughter, with a cry, upon
his breast—
Then a pause, and then a silence—it was Nature told
the rest.
Change the scene to melodrama, realistic in its day,
Who forgets his *Robert Landry*, in the old Adelphic
Play ?
Ere the grass grows green above him, ere we ring the
curtain down,
Let one throb of recollection stir the pulses of the
town !
He outlived his generation, did this venerable Sage,
Smiled at "coat-and-trouser" pieces and a milk-and-
water Age.
Who can wonder that an Actor and a leader turned
his back
On a decorated Drama and an Art of *bric-à-brac* ?

Punch, July 22, 1882.

BENJAMIN WEBSTER.

Benjamin Nottingham Webster, or, as he was universally called, Benjamin Webster, was born at Bath on Sept. 3, 1798. His father is said, by some writers, to have been a captain in the army ; while others declare that he was a teacher of dancing. The following sentence in George Daniel's memoir of Webster, in Cumberland's "British Theatre," seems to imply that in some mysterious way he managed to combine these callings : "His father, who had formerly been a composer and actor of pantomime, first came to that city by command of the Duke of York to organize the Volunteers." In the Bath play-bills the names of pupils of "Mr. Webster, dancing master of this city," occasionally appeared ; and in the season of 1814-15 Master Webster, probably Benjamin, was announced to dance. His first engagement as an actor was with Watson, the manager of the Warwick Circuit, who engaged him to play Harlequin, utility, and second fiddle in the orchestra, at a salary of twenty-five shillings per week ; and under him he made his first appearance at Warwick, as *Thessalus* in 'Alexander the Great.' He proceeded with Watson to the other towns of the circuit ; at one of which the manager, finding it difficult to make ends meet, disappeared with whatever ready money he could lay hands on,

and left his company stranded. The deserted actors were picked up by a strolling manager named Wilson, who engaged them on "sharing" terms; and with him they opened at Bromsgrove, near Birmingham, in a barn, on a stage ten feet long and seven feet in height. Webster's first night's work was doubling the parts of *Sir Charles Cropland* and *Stephen Harrowby* in the 'Poor Gentleman,' dancing a hornpipe, *without music*, after the comedy; and playing *Plainway* in 'Raising the Wind,' with his head chalked to represent grey hair. In a short time the "shares" went down to eighteenpence a week, and starvation was imminent, when Webster was fortunately engaged by Mr. Talbot, of Belfast, at thirty shillings a week. After finishing this engagement he arrived in London, and it was probably at this point of his career that he made his appearance at the Coburg. His name first appears in the bills on Whit-Monday, 1818, as one of a Chorus of Smugglers in 'Trial by Battle'; and one of *Alzora's* suite in the Ballet of 'Alzora and Nerine.' Shortly after, he played a nameless "combatant" in the 'Banished Brother,'— "Mr. Webster" being always in the smallest type,— but on June 8, he was dignified with a real part to play, *Robert Mortimer*, in 'Wallace, the Hero of Scotland.' He appears to have remained at the Coburg only a few weeks. He played an engagement at Croydon under Beverley, father of the famous scene-painter, and subsequently appeared at Beverley's theatre in Tottenham Street, then known as the Regency, afterwards as the Queen's, and later still as the Prince of Wales's. He also played at the English Opera, now the Lyceum, but did not attract any attention until about 1824 or 1825, at which time

he was a member of the Drury Lane company, and played, at a few hours' notice, the part of *Pompey* in 'Measure for Measure,' which Harley was unable to act, owing to sudden illness. His appearance in this character was a great success; but he does not seem to have improved his position in the theatre by it; for it was not until he was engaged at the Haymarket that he obtained parts of any importance. He made his first appearance at this theatre on June 15, 1829, in the part of *Trusty* in a successful farce named 'Lodgings for Single Gentlemen.'

In 1837 he became lessee and manager of the Haymarket, which he opened on June 12. He became lessee of the Adelphi, which was managed by Madame Celeste, in 1844, and retained possession of both theatres for nine years, when he was compelled to give up the Haymarket, the last night of his reign being March 14, 1853. He continued his management of the Adelphi until his retirement from the stage in 1874.

As a manager, Webster was a very notable figure. He was extremely liberal and enterprising; he always kept good companies, and he produced an extraordinary number of original plays by the leading authors of the day. One of his most notorious productions was the famous Prize Comedy. In June, 1843, it was announced on the bills that £500 "with certain contingent advantages" would be paid for an original English comedy illustrative in plot and character of English manners and customs. A committee was appointed to consider the plays, of which ninety-seven were sent in. It consisted of Charles Kemble, then Examiner of Plays; Charles Mayne Young, the

tragedian ; G. P. R. James, the novelist ; the Rev. Alexander Dyce ; and Messrs. E. R. Moran, H. Ottley, and J. C. Searle. They unanimously selected a play called 'Quid pro Quo ; or, the Day of Dupes,' which turned out to be the work of Mrs. Charles Gore, the novelist. On its production on June 18, 1844, it was received with derision, and it only remained on the bills for some five weeks, in spite of the natural desire of the manager to do all in his power to force its success.

But, in addition to Mrs. Gore's unfortunate comedy, Webster produced many plays of great importance, among which may be mentioned the 'Love Chase,' 'Money,' 'Used Up,' 'Time Works Wonders,' the 'Cricket on the Hearth,' the 'Roused Lion,' the 'Wife's Secret,' the 'Serious Family,' and 'Masks and Faces,' produced at the Haymarket ; and the 'Marble Heart,' 'Janet Pride,' the 'Willow Copse,' the 'Dead Heart,' and the 'Colleen Bawn,' produced at the Adelphi. One of Webster's most interesting revivals was that of the 'Taming of the Shrew,' at the Haymarket, which he played, at Planché's suggestion, with only two scenes ; the first being the outside of the Alehouse, in front of which *Christopher Sly* is found asleep by the nobleman ; and the second, the Bedchamber in which the comedy is played before *Sly*. The changes of scene in the comedy itself were indicated merely by a placard affixed to the wall of the bedchamber, and the curtain never fell during the entire five acts.

Macready was the attraction on whom Webster relied at the opening of his adventure at the Haymarket ; he was a frequent star there during the remainder of

his career, and there he played his series of farewell performances. Other eminent performers who appeared under Webster's management were Mrs. Nisbett, Mrs. Glover, Mr. and Mrs. Keeley, Charlotte Cushman, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, Mrs. Stirling, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Wigan, Madame Celeste, Phelps, Farren, C. J. Mathews and Madame Vestris, Buckstone, and Toole.

Webster was a prolific dramatist ; most of his pieces being adaptations from the French.

As an actor, Webster was remarkably versatile. His line was that known as "character acting ;" a line which may almost be said to include everything but classical tragedy ; and it might be claimed for him that he filled the whole of that range of parts. In the boisterous humor of *Petruchio*, and in the pathos of *Triplet*, he was equally true to nature. He was an actor who took infinite pains with all that he did, and who brought great subtlety and originality to bear on all his conceptions. Even at his worst he was always intelligent ; at his best he was brilliant. One of his greatest parts was *Triplet* ; of which Mr. Morley says, in his 'Journal of a London Playgoer,' that "Goldsmith could not have better described, or Leslie painted, the poor poet." It was strong and broad in conception, yet was studied with a marvelous minuteness and brilliancy of detail. Humor and pathos were equally at the command of the actor, whose playing to quote Mr. Morley again, "belonged to most real art."

Among his characters may be mentioned *Triplet*, *Luke Fielding*, *Penn Holder* in 'One Touch of Nature', *Graves* in 'Money', *Clown* in 'Twelfth Night',

Petruchio, Moses in ‘School for Scandal’, *John Peery-bingle, Stanislas de Fonblanche, Jabez Sneed* in ‘Wife’s Secret’, *Softy* in ‘Aurora Floyd’, *Tartuffe, Richard Pride* in ‘Janet Pride’, *Robert Landry* in ‘Dead Heart’, and *Joey Ladle* in ‘No Thoroughfare’.

Webster made his last appearance on the stage on the occasion of Mrs. Alfred Mellon’s benefit at Drury Lane on May 15, 1878, speaking part of a rhymed address. He died July 8, 1882.

ROBERT W. LOWE.

Mr. Webster has been the most successful manager of the present age, and probably so because he has been about the most liberal and spirited ; companies unparalleled for the production of our sterling comedies have been from time to time collected within the walls of his theatre, and a remarkable number of original dramas, by the first authors of the day, have been produced under his superintendence. It is pleasurable to know that Mr. Webster’s good fortune is singularly deserved, as he is a man of the purest and most unsullied honor ; and although he has sometimes met with serious reverses in his managerial career, he has never failed in honorably carrying out every pecuniary engagement he entered into.

As an actor he excels in the delineation of what are called character parts, where the performer has to work conjointly with the author in their creation ; he is admirable in dramatic eccentricities, and his *Malvolio* in ‘Twelfth Night’ is the most perfect we have witnessed ; but his range of characters is by no means

limited, and perhaps we could not mention two greater contrasts, as dramatic pictures, than his dashing, vigorous representation of the bold *Petruchio*, and his admirable polished performance of the deceitful and malignant *Tartuffe*, in the recent translation of Molière's comedy, produced at the Haymarket; a more finished realization of this subtle and difficult conception, it would be hard to imagine.

Mr. Webster is a correct and careful actor at all times; occasionally he is a very brilliant one; in his worst parts he scarcely falls to mediocrity, in his best he rises to the development of genius. He has a clear and powerful voice, though sometimes deficient in variety; a rich vein of humor; and in serious parts, often exhibits pathetic power of no common kind.

'Tallis's Drawing Room Table Book,' *Webster*.

Never did Mr. Webster play more finely than in this difficult position. While hurried along by a storm of passionate affection, *Holder* [in 'One Touch of Nature'] is constantly forced to think of his merely artificial character, and his most violent outbreaks are checked by a prosaic attention to business. This complexity is represented with marvelous truth and power by Mr. Webster, who works at the character as if he liked it, and who, by the great applause he received, will doubtless abandon his intention of performing the piece for "one night only."

London Times, Aug. 8, 1859.

Such a part as this, embracing many phases, and presenting the memorabilia of a life, gives to Mr.

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Webster that variety of expression of which he ever takes such advantage. As an artistic delineation his *Robert Landry* ['Dead Heart'] stands in the present day alone. There is no London actor who can compete with it in its rough strength and its intense feeling.

Athenaeum, Nov. 19, 1859.

The only actors I have seen in the part of *Tartuffe* are Bocage and our Webster. Bocage was saturnine and sensual, Webster was cat-like and sensual; both were forcible, both were true.

GEORGE HENRY LEWES: 'On Actors and the Art of Acting,' chap. 12.

"We have seen Munden," says Boaden, "play three drunken parts in a night, and come out fresh in them all; and such was his practical discrimination that we could not have transferred a tone or a stagger without injury to the inept sarcasms of *Crock*, the maudlin philanthropy of *Nipperton* or the sublime stupidity of *Dozey*." Those who have witnessed Mr. Webster's performance of *Richard Pride*, in each act of which he was in a different state of drunkenness, may realize something of this description.

HENRY BARTON BAKER: 'English Actors,' vol. ii., chap. 8.

There is a charming scene when *Peg* visits the poor poet in his garret, where his ailing wife and starving children are sadly interrupting the flow of its comic muse. Nothing here was lost in Mr. Webster's hands —the angry fretfulness followed by instant remorse,

the efforts of self-restraint which are but efforts in vain, the energy that fitfully breaks out, and then pitifully breaks down, and the final loss of hope, even of faith in a better Providence which is to set right all that misery and wrong—the picture was complete, and set forth with its immemorial Grub-Street appendage of no shirt and ragged but ample ruffles.

JOHN MORLEY: 'Journal of a London Playgoer,' Nov. 27, 1852.

The drunken airs and variations in the temper—the half sober efforts to stare down suspicion and to hide fear when in the presence of one who may detect a crime—the faint strugglings of a naturally gentle heart, overpowered by the curses that come in the brain of drunkenness—are marked by Mr. Webster in his part of *Richard Pride* with peculiar refinement.

Ibid., Feb. 10, 1855.

The make-up of the actor, with deformed back, crooked limbs, a Caliban forehead under a thief's crop of red hair, a penthouse of shaggy eyebrow over cunning eyes, and a great cruel, witless mouth that, we know not how, seems to be all fang, creates a being in whom not even an expert play-goer, without assurance of the play-bill, would easily recognize Mr. Webster.

..... Mr. Webster acts the part [*Daniel Hargreaves*] through with a terrible energy. His greed, cunning and malice become diabolical under unwonted excitement and temptation; and we part from him as he is dragged off screaming unmitigated hate,—in strong contrast to the abject, entreating cries of animal fear with which the half-witted man, as Mr. Belmore

represents him, is carried off, as he supposes, to be hanged like a dog straightway.

Ibid., March 21, 1863.

Webster may be classed with Macready and Phelps in respect of the part he then bore in sustaining the English drama ; and he also wrote, or adapted from the French, several pieces which gained approval and success. Mr. Webster's own powers were best displayed, like those of Mr. Phelps, in the representation of strongly marked individualities, endowed with superior intellectual energy and force of will.

Illustrated London News, July 22, 1882.

As an actor both in melodrama and comedy, but more particularly in the latter, he was deservedly popular. His *Robert Landry*, *Triplet*, *Tartuffe*, *Belphegor*, *Richard Pride*, and many other impersonations, were powerful performances, strongly tinged with that imaginative cast which is the rarest and most precious of the actor's gifts. As an author, though his name was appended to many pieces, he cannot indeed claim high rank, his most successful productions being merely adaptations ; but he did much to encourage dramatic literature, and paid, during his long management of the Haymarket and the Adelphi, what according to the standard of those days, were considered very liberal sums for new plays to many distinguished dramatists. "The Dramatic College" for decayed actors and actresses, which he originated, was a bold and well-meant, but, as it proved, not a very practicable scheme.

Graphic, London, July 15, 1882.

JOHN BALDWIN BUCKSTONE.

1802-1879.

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Light lie the turf on the old Actor's bier.
Of many a load he lightened many a heart;
A more mirth-making mimic for many a year
We are not like to see. "Tis sad to part,

And leave him lying here out in the cold,
Who held such cosy corners of our past !
Farewell old "Bucky," many a heart will hold
Thy memory green, for all shades o'er it cast !

Punch, Nov. 15, 1879.



JOHN BALDWIN BUCKSTONE AND MRS. FITZWILLIAM
In "Good for Nothing."

JOHN BALDWIN BUCKSTONE.

It is as the most popular low comedian of a period rich in drolls of a like order, that John Baldwin Buckstone claims a place in theatrical annals. As a manager, if not absolutely a failure, he was certainly not a conspicuous success. As an author he contributed nothing of lasting importance to the English drama. It is as the representative of a well-nigh extinct school of comic acting that he deserves to be remembered.

John Baldwin Buckstone was born at Hoxton (some say at Walworth), Sept. 14, 1802. We have it on his own authority that he was for some time a "reefer" (*i. e.*, midshipman), and he is said to have been articled to a solicitor. While a mere boy, he sent two five-act tragedies and a five-act comedy to the manager of a booth-theatre at Peckham. They were declined, but their author was consoled by being permitted to appear for one night only as *Captain Aubri* in the 'Dog of Montargis.' He soon after joined a strolling company, with which he is said to have made his first appearance as *Gabriel* in the 'Children of the Wood' at Wokingham, Berkshire. He endured many hardships in his life as a stroller. On one occasion, as he himself used to relate, he walked in two days from Northampton to London, 72 miles, with only four-pence-halfpenny to pay for food and lodging. On

another occasion, Edmund Kean, finding the company to which he belonged starving at Hastings, gave a performance of *Shylock* for their benefit (Buckstone playing *Gratiano*), and insisted that Elliston, who was with him, should play the 'Liar' as an afterpiece. Buckstone's first appearance in London took place at the Surrey Theatre, Jan. 30, 1823, when he played *Ramsay the Watchmaker* in the 'Fortunes of Nigel.' During the remainder of the season he played minor parts in the adaptations of the Waverley Novels then in vogue, and in other productions. Among his characters were *Peter* in 'Romeo and Juliet' (Mrs. Fitzwilliam, afterward his wife, being the *Juliet*), and *Osric* in a "Grand Melodrama" founded on 'Hamlet.' In the autumn his appearances became rare, he did not play in the pantomime, and in the spring of 1824 he seems to have been almost idle, though he was now so well known to transpontine play-goers that the play-bill for March 1 announces "his second appearance this season." The next autumn he joined the rival company at the Coburg Theatre, making his first appearance Oct. 18, 1824, as *Lazarus Snell* in 'Wake not the Dead; or, the Spectre Bride.' Here he remained until, on Oct. 1, 1827,* he joined the company under the management of Yates and Terry at the Adelphi, playing *Bobby Trot* in his own 'Luke the Laborer,' which had been produced at this theatre just a year before (Oct. 16, 1826). The Adelphi remained his winter headquarters until 1840. He produced here

* His first appearance at this theatre according to the play-bill. On March 25, 1824, "Mr. Buckstone" is announced to play the part of *Bill Bobstay* in a ballet of action called the 'Red Indian;' but this may have been a utility-man whose name is elsewhere spelt "Buxton."

some of his most successful plays, such as the 'Wreck Ashore,' 'Victorine,' 'Forgery, or the Reading of the Will,' the 'Green Bushes,' the 'Flowers of the Forest,' 'Poor Jack,'* etc. ; and toward the close of the period he took part in some of the hot-haste dramatizations of Dickens's novels, playing, for instance, *Jingle* in the 'Peregrinations of Pickwick,' and *Newman Noggs* in the 'Fortunes of Smike.' During these years, however, he made frequent excursions to other theatres. He was the original *Gnatbrain* in 'Black-Eyed Susan,' produced at the Surrey Theatre, June 8, 1829 ; and from 1833 onward, he joined the Haymarket company every summer, making his first appearance at that theatre, April 8, as *Dan* in 'John Bull.' At first he appeared only in his own plays and other modern farces and melodramas. In 1833, for example, the 'Merry Wives,' 'Much Ado,' 'School for Scandal,' and other classic comedies were produced without his co-operation; *Grumio* in 'Katherine and Petruchio' being his only Shaksperean part. In 1834 his chief part was *Mr. Dove* in his own 'Married Life.' Not till 1835 does he appear as *Verges* in 'Much Ado,' and *Backbite* in the 'School for Scandal.' Next season he played *David* in the 'Rivals,' the *Third Witch* to Vandenhoff's *Macbeth*, *Trinculo* in the 'Tempest,' and *Aguecheek* in 'Twelfth Night.' From this time forward he went on gradually annexing the leading comedy parts of the classical repertory—*Master Matthew* in 'Every Man in his Humor'; *Launcelot* in the 'Merchant of Venice';

* He received very low prices (£50 to £70) for these plays. See letter from Buckstone to Frederick Yates in Edmund Yates's 'Recollections and Experiences,' vol. i., p. 33.

the *First Gravedigger* in ‘Hamlet,’ etc.—as well as adding to his long list of modern creations. In 1840 he went to America, where he did not meet with much success. On Oct. 19, 1842, he made his re-appearance at the Haymarket in the part of *Mr. Dove*, and with a few short breaks his connection with this theatre lasted until his retirement from the stage. It was during one of these breaks that he created at the Lyceum (Nov. 1, 1847) the character of *Box* in Maddison Morton’s immortal ‘*Box and Cox*.’ He also appeared under Bunn’s management at Drury Lane.

In 1853, on Benjamin Webster’s removal to the Adelphi, Buckstone undertook the management of the Haymarket. He opened his first season on Easter Monday, March 28, with a performance of the ‘*Rivals*.’ Besides Mr. Barry Sullivan, his company included the two rare comedians whose names, with his own, shed a lustre over the declining days of the Old Haymarket—Compton, the inimitable *Touchstone*, *Gravedigger*, *Crabtree*, *Mawworm*; and Chippendale, lovingly remembered as “old Chip,” than whom no more exquisite *Sir Peter*, *Sir Anthony* or *Mr. Hardcastle* ever trod the boards. Though much excellent and delightful work was done at the Haymarket under Buckstone’s rule, as thousands of living play-goers can testify, yet he cannot be described as a distinguished or successful manager. He fell, it is true, upon evil days, when competition was increasing on every hand; while at the same time the cultured public was holding aloof from the theatre. His deafness, too, which was latterly almost complete, prevented him from taking an energetic part in the direction of the stage, and

forced him to leave to subordinates many things which should by rights have been his own personal charge. After making all allowances, however, we cannot acquit him of an unfortunate improvidence, both financial and artistic. He was of an easy, slovenly, happy-go-lucky nature, with a strong theatrical instinct, but with little foresight and still less artistic conscience. From one besetting sin of the actor-manager he seems to have been remarkably free, to wit, the egoism which insists on undue personal prominence. He surrounded himself with good actors and gave them unstinted scope for development, each in his line. This was no small merit, and deserves to be specially emphasized in these days. Moreover he was fairly liberal and careful, after the standard of his time, in the dressing and mounting of his productions. In these two points, it may almost be said, his merits as a manager are summed up. Against them we have to place the defects which, in spite of the prestige of his theatre and the merits of his actors, landed his undertaking, after many fluctuations of fortune, in irretrievable disaster.

A certain number of classical comedies always held their place in the Haymarket repertory, being performed from time to time in London and still more frequently on the very successful provincial tours of the company. In these Buckstone played such parts as *Aguecheek*, *Touchstone*, *Acres*, *Backbite*, and *Tony Lumpkin*, importing into each his peculiar wry-mouthed, wrinkle-eyed humor, with his unctuous gobbling chuckle and his gait between a shamble and a hop. For the rest he relied mainly upon the plays of such modern writers as Mr. Tom Taylor, Mr. Stirling Coyne, Dr.

Westland Marston, and latterly (after Mr. and Mrs. Kendal had joined his company) of Mr. W. S. Gilbert. Of Mr. Tom Taylor's comedies eight at least were produced at the Haymarket, Buckstone playing *Butterby* in 'Victims' (1857), *Botcherly* in 'An Unequal Match' (1857), *Peckover* in the 'Contested Election' (1859), *Lovibond* in the 'Overland Route' (1860), *Beetle* in the 'Babes in the Wood' (1860), *Asa Trenchard* to Sothern's *Dundreary* in 'Our American Cousin' (1861), and *Bunter* in 'New Men and Old Acres' (1869). Among other more or less memorable productions under his management may be mentioned Coyne's 'Everybody's Friend,' with Buckstone as *Wellington de Boots* (1859); T. W. Robertson's 'David Garrick' with Sothern in the title part and Buckstone as *Squire Chevy* (1864); Westland Marston's 'Hero of Romance' ('Le Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre') with Sothern and Mrs. Kendal as the hero and heroine, and Buckstone as *Dr. Lafitte* (1868); Gilbert's 'Palace of Truth' (1870), 'Pygmalion and Galatea' (1871), the 'Wicked World' (1873), and 'Charity' (1874): In the parts of *King Phanor* and *Chrysos* in Mr. Gilbert's two earlier plays, Buckstone found ample opportunity to indulge in that unctuous coarseness of intention which was characteristic, not of himself alone, but of his school.

Illness and pecuniary troubles darkened Buckstone's declining days. It was no doubt the need of money which induced him to lag superfluous on the stage, when his memory and his vigor were alike departed. A few years before his death he wrote to Mr. Edmund Yates: ". . . I have seven young children and a wife [a second wife] whom, old as I am, I love, and for

their sakes alone I wish for a little more working-time." Several public benefits were organized on his behalf, but it is to be feared that they did little to relieve his straitened circumstances. He survived for some time the almost total extinction of his powers of mind and body, and died Oct. 31, 1879.

No fewer than forty-six plays (melodramas, burlettas and farces) are attributed to him in the British Museum Catalogue, and this list is certainly not exhaustive, as several of his works were never printed. Besides those already mentioned, the most noteworthy of his productions were the 'Dream at Sea,' 'Good for Nothing,' 'Rough Diamond,' 'Irish Lion,' and 'Kiss in the Dark.' Many of his plays were direct adaptations from the French and in most of them he helped himself freely to any ideas or situations that suited his purpose.

WILLIAM ARCHER.

At the Haymarket Buckstone showed his comic phiz again on Wednesday, after his long absence in America, and literally "tipped the wink" to the audience, who responded with a roar of laughter. After playing *Dove* in his own grotesque piece, 'Married Life,' he was called forward, and expressed, in a becoming and feeling manner, his acknowledgments of the welcome.

Athenæum, Oct. 22, 1842.

In the season of 1848-9 he had returned to the Haymarket Theatre, and was there playing in the Shaksperean revivals introduced during the temporary

engagement of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean. Saturday, June 2, 1849, revival of 'Macbeth,' Mr. Buckstone sustained the part of one of the Weird Sisters—be it recorded, much to the amusement of the audience and to the no little dismay of the principal performers concerned.

It may be said that Mr. Buckstone has played almost all the principal low comedy parts of the English Drama presented on the London stage within living memory. His name will be inseparably associated with some of the more amusing characters in the higher range of old English comedy, such, for example, as *Grumio*, *Speed*, *Touchstone*, *Sir Andrew Aguecheek*, *Zekiel Homespun*, *Tony Lumpkin*, and *Bob Acres*; and, it may be added, that the varied attributes of those characters have invariably received at his hand the happiest and most complete illustration. Since the year 1876 Mr. Buckstone has ceased to take any active part in the duties of his profession.

CHARLES EYRE PASCOE: 'The Dramatic List,' *Buckstone.*

As a comedian, Mr. Buckstone has been accused of being a mannerist, even by some of those who readily acknowledge his excellence in all other respects. But admitting this, to some extent, to be the case, we must not attribute too much value to the charge. The late Mr. James Kenney, the dramatist, frequently asserted that every comedian ought to be a mannerist, provided the manner was good and original. Mr. Buckstone's originality cannot be questioned; his style is essentially his own; and must be admitted, even by the most lachrymose critic, to be not only highly natural

and truthful, but overflowing with a native mirth and spontaneous humor which takes irresistible possession of his audience, and makes the gravest smile and the cheerful roar. Every original mind has an appearance of mannerism.

‘Tallis’s Drawing-Room Table Book,’ *J. B. Buckstone.*

All those abrupt transitions, chuckles and alternations from briskness to gravity, by which his audience was kept in a gale of merriment, were among the strangest vocal effects imaginable ; and yet they were adroitly managed burlesque imitations of Kean, Macready, and Kemble. Mr. Buckstone showed in such artificial methods his powers of analysis and recombination, and his skill as a dramatic artist, but confined himself within the narrow limit of a mimetic style.

JAMES E. MURDOCH : ‘The Stage,’ *chap. xix.*

His vitality was great ; his animal spirits were abundant ; his personal eccentricities were exceedingly droll. His principal defect as an actor was his undue use of caricature in moments and situations where it should not appear ; but this proceeded out of an excess of comic humor. He was a ludicrous man, and essentially original and not a little queer in his ways ; he did not repress himself, and he exulted in making laughter. His appearance and movements were singular and comic. His countenance commingled intellect, shrewdness, a kind of knowing austerity, and a whimsicality of expression ; and his gray eyes were full of good nature, sense and fun. He had a gruff and

grumbling voice, and a nonchalant manner of delivery, which yet had the effect of positive emphasis. His ability as an actor, however, was less conspicuous than his ability as a writer for the stage. He could not take rank with either Burton, Blake, Hackett, Finn, Bass or Burke. He was of about the calibre and class of Barnes, Sefton, and Holland—quizzical and frolicsome rather than unctuous, and more addicted to the method known as “mugging” than qualified in the higher art of developing a humorous nature under the pressure of mirth-provoking circumstances. He was fortunate in becoming, long ago, a London favorite. This privileged distinction he reached through his contagious whimsicality; and, when once this safe haven has been secured, it is perpetual. He was respected, liked, and admired. He had become a tradition and an institution. His voice and his laugh, heard for half a century, had twined themselves with the rosiest recollections of the play-goers of two or three generations. There might be differences of opinion about others, but the agreement was universal about him. Even in his decline, and during a considerable period of decrepitude, the public affection for “Bucky” was never known to waver.

WILLIAM WINTER: *New York Tribune*, Nov. 1,
1879.

Mr. Buckstone, as a writer, is essentially a *farceur*; he is given to extravagances of plot and dialogue even in what he calls his comedies; many of these, as ‘Married’ Life,’ being nothing more than farces in three acts. He is certainly clever as an actor and as an author; he is very funny, and is very popular in

London ; but his popularity is among the frequenters of the pit rather than among the loungers of the boxes. Those who remember him during his engagement here, or in later years have seen him on his own London stage, have noticed, no doubt, about his acting, something that is almost a lack of refinement, a something which, as it approached the broad joke, or the *double entendre*, reminds us of our own Burton. As a comedian, Mr. Buckstone is truly a low comedian ; as an author, although he is hardly low, still he is scarcely high : he is farcical, fond of absurd surprises, abounding in ludicrous situations ; still he is fresh, often original, and always amusing.

LAURENCE HUTTON : 'Plays and Players,' *chap. 22, pp. 185-6.*

And then Buckstone !—what a part this *Mr. Lovibond* the hen-pecked, cowed individual, the luckless wretch who ships in the Alias as a forger, and is hand-cuffed for his pains—was far the most eccentric and genial comedian of his time. Who that saw it will ever forget that comical figure, frightfully seasick, appearing on the stage in a white cotton nightcap and flannel dressing-gown, with a gash in his throat made by shaving, and the very picture of wretchedness ? Who that ever heard it can fail to remember that one sentence as Buckstone delivered it, and as only Buckstone could deliver it, "She's an angel !—better than an angel ! She hasn't any wings to fly away with, and she *has* something to sit down upon !" Such a sentence was inevitable when Buckstone was acting. It was not *Mr. Lovibond*, a character drawn from the study of life or human nature, but Buckstone in

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comical circumstances, Buckstone seasick and in hand-cuffs.

The Theatre, Nov., 1882.

As actor the English stage has seen few more genial and humorous mimics than Buckstone. His art was of the English style, broad and laughter-making. He always seemed to attach more importance to the humorous than to any other quality of the part he acted. But he did not overlook the general aspect of his parts, though he clothed them all in a uniform garb of the Buckstonian humor, conveyed through the inimitable eye-twinkle and mouth-twist all knew so well, and the rich, oily chuckle of a voice whose sound could produce a roar before the actor was seen. He usually provoked laughter, however, without forcing, and was admirable in the quiet, unerring power with which he made a point. Considering his deafness, it was wonderful how thoroughly well he managed to pitch his voice, always audible without undue strain or stress. And he was a very fair actor, never taking more than his due share of the stage, or exaggerating his by-play so as to distract attention from others. I never saw in him any trace of personal jealousy or unfairness, on or off the stage. But his merits as an actor were not more unmistakable, to my mind, than his shortcomings as a manager, on which I have dwelt already, and which were dependent on points in his character in which elements of good and bad were curiously mingled. On the latter of these I do not intend to dwell. It is pleasanter to expatiate on that which none can deny, the strenuous support he gave to all efforts at helping his brethren; above

all, the large part he bore in forwarding the General Theatrical Fund, at whose dinners his presence and annual speech as treasurer were as certain as they were welcome and helpful.

TOM TAYLOR, in the *Theatre*, Dec., 1879.

Among the famous English actors is Tom Baldwin Buckstone, who must now be about seventy-five years of age; but old as he is, he gets hold of his audience more rapidly than any one I know. A simple "good morning" from him seems to set the house in a roar. His personal magnetism is simply wonderful. I always stipulate when I play at the Haymarket, London, that Buckstone shall appear in the same piece with me. He is, like old William Warren, of Boston, a perennial favorite. He acts as if he had strings on all of his fingers attached to the audience in front, and plays with them and pulls them about just as he wants. I think he has been on the stage about fifty-five years. During my connection with him of nearly fourteen years there has never been a scrap of paper between us. He is emphatically a man of his word. His theatre—the Haymarket—yields him a very handsome income from the production of light comedies and the appearance of stars like J. S. Clarke, Miss Neilson and others.

E. A. SOTHERN : in 'Birds of a Feather,' p. 54.

Buckstone was so irresistibly comic that Macready asked him to give up the *Gravedigger*, because he could not refrain from laughter at Buckstone's expression of face as he handed him the skull. He had the

same dread of his playing one of the witches in
'Macbeth.'

HENRY H. HOWE, in the 'Green Room,' Christmas,
1880.

As an actor Mr. Buckstone's powers were restricted to broad comedy, but within that range he was supreme. Few men perhaps have possessed to a greater extent the power of communicating the spirit of mirth to an audience. He had a fund of rich, genial, buoyant, persuasive humor, and could excite it with a due regard to the requirements of character and the laws of theatrical effect. He was helped, too, in his vocation by remarkable physical attributes. . . . Indeed, it was only necessary for him to appear upon the stage and make the sound of his peculiar voice heard to send a ripple of laughter over the house.

Times, London, Nov. 1, 1879.

CHARLES JAMES MATHEWS.

1803—1878.

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His bark rode lightly o'er the shores of life
And braved the buffet of its stormiest swell ;
'Twas something in this age of care and strife
To know one soul whose sun no cloud could quell.

And so he lived and acted, laughed and spread
An atmosphere of gaiety and grace ;
Light as his artless art the life he led,
And Old and New World hailed his welcome face.

Punch, July 6, 1878.

CHARLES JAMES MATHEWS.

"A man may be a good man without being a clergyman, but to force him to be a clergyman may tend to make him a bad man," said the wise and pious father of Charles Mathews when informed that the latter's newborn son had been dedicated to the Church. Accordingly, Charles James Mathews, the son in question, was allowed to follow his desire to be an architect, which seems to have led him into many pleasant places—to Paris with Pugin, to Italy with the Blessingtons, almost into a duel with Count D'Orsay, to Italy again with James d'Egville, where, in Florence, he made a great hit in theatricals at Lord Normanby's.

His first public appearance, however, had taken place in a private performance at the English Opera House, on the site of the present Lyceum, April 26, 1822, on his return from Paris. His success on this occasion caused his father to urge him to adopt the profession of the stage, for which he seemed so well fitted, rather than to spend years in acquiring one for which he displayed far less talent, and in which he never shone. But with the exception of various adaptations of French plays, and contributions to the text of some of his father's 'At Homes,' his connection with the drama was that of an amateur—acting with the Duchess of Bedford at Woburn Abbey—and he led

the life of a handsome, gay and clever man about town until his father's death in 1835.

Then the necessity of providing for himself and of protecting his own and his mother's interest in the Adelphi property, led him to join with Yates in the management of that theatre. Four months of it were enough, however, and on Nov. 6, 1835, he at length followed his father's advice, and appeared at the Olympic as *George Rattleton* in the 'Humpbacked Lover,' a play of his own contriving, and as *Tim Topple the Tiger*, in the 'Old and Young Stager,' a farce by Leman Rode, written for Mathews and Liston; the latter delaying his own departure from the stage to bring forward the son of his life-long friend.

"As *George Rattleton*," says Dutton Cook, paraphrasing a contemporary critic, "he played with lively ease and the unembarrassed confidence of a practised actor, speaking and looking 'like a man of sense and a gentleman.'" In the farce he made use of his powers of mimicry, and played the part in imitation of his father's style. His merits were recognized, and he stepped at once into as prominent a position on the stage as that which the elder Mathews, at the same age, had only won after years of toil.

Two brilliant seasons followed with Mme. Vestris at the Olympic. "There," writes Mathews in his autobiography, "was introduced that reform in all theatrical matters which has since been adopted in every theatre in the kingdom. Drawing-rooms were fitted up like drawing-rooms and furnished with care and taste. Two chairs no longer indicated that two persons were to be seated, the two chairs being removed indicating that the two persons were *not* to be seated."

A liberal offer from Price of the Park Theatre, New York, brought Actor and Manager to America. Previous to their sailing they paid deference to the prejudices of their new public by becoming man and wife, July 18, 1838. But in spite of this precaution, their reception was not cordial, and in five months they were home again building up the fortunes of the Olympic, which had not prospered under Planché's management during their absence. The next year Mathews and his wife moved with all their scenery, dresses and properties to Covent Garden, of which they assumed the control. With a company of great strength they brought out many new plays, and gave many splendid revivals, Mathews himself acting a large number of characters. In the first season he made a distinct hit as *Slender* in the 'Merry Wives ;' and the second was notable for the first production of 'London Assurance,' March 4, 1841. On this occasion, "Mr. Lee Moreton, the author," says a writer in the *Times*, "was led forward eying the enthusiastic multitude with considerable nervousness." Their third season brought out Adelaide Kemble for the first time on the English stage ; and was made memorable by the reappearance of Charles Kemble for six nights by royal command. Yet so great were the expenses incurred in starting and running the theatre with its six hundred and eighty-four employees, that when in 1842 it was taken out of their hands, Mathews writes that he and Mme. Vestris found themselves with "nothing left but a piece of plate (presented by the company) and the debts of the concern," which amounted to about £30,000.

This period of Mathews's career was marked by a

reckless prodigality not only in the debts that he incurred, but in the wide range of parts that he assumed. And the same light-hearted buoyancy of character which had carried him through such parts as *Charles Surface* and *Puff* with an airy grace and captivating charm that has never been equalled, enabled him to bear the burden of his obligations with an equanimity that few could rival, and he himself has sought to deny. The bankruptcy law afforded him an easy relief from his debts, but the stage training and experience he had gained in his ambitious ventures were a permanent benefit that was worth to him all that it had cost his creditors.

For the twelve years following, Mathews led an exciting life. He had a conscience, though of a somewhat unconventional type, and in his anxiety to repay certain of his personal accounts, he again involved himself in a muddle of bill-brokers, money-lenders, and process-servers, that finally drove him to France, and a second time to take the "benefit of the act." After a short engagement with Macready at Drury Lane, Mathews went to Webster at the Hay-market, where in 1844 he made one of his greatest successes as *Sir Charles Coldstream* in 'Used Up,' a version by Boucicault of the French 'L'Homme Blasé' which Mathews subsequently so adapted and assimilated that he claimed it as his own. Of his performance in the first act of this play, G. H. Lewes writes: "As the languorous man of fashion Charles Mathews is faultless. There is an exquisite moderation in his performance which shows a nice perception of nature. The coolness is never overdone. The languor is never obtruded. . . . From first to last we have a

character the integrity of which is never sacrificed to isolated effects."

In 1847, Mme. Vestris and her husband again ventured into management, and retained control of the Lyceum through seven years of ups and downs and imminent disaster. Here in Oct. 1851, they brought out the 'Game of Speculation,' a three act version by Lewes of Balzac's 'Mercadet le Faiseur.' Got was identified with the part of *Mercadet* in France, but Lewes greatly preferred the *Affable Hawk* of Mathews. "The artistic merit of Mathews's performance," he claimed, "was so great that it almost became an offence against morality, by investing a swindler with irresistible charms, and making the very audacity of deceit a source of pleasurable sympathy." And Got himself, in his letter on the English stage, refers to the acting of Mathews as a performance from which he himself had been able to get more than one hint.

Lack of capital and a series of misfortunes once more involved Mathews in financial difficulties. The Lyceum was given up, he again passed through the Insolvent Debtors' Court, and this brought his career as a manager to an end. The death of Mme. Vestris occurred in 1856, and in the following year Mathews made his second visit to the United States, alone. But when he returned after a year's absence, he was accompanied by his wife, having married Mrs. A. H. Davenport on Valentine's Day, 1858, at the close of a sixty nights' engagement at Burton's Theatre in New York. She made him, he declares, "a prudent, economical, industrious little helpmate, who by two or three years of good management, repaired the cruelty of fortune in other respects, and who, with a

clear little head and a good little heart, at length did for me what I had never been able to do myself—kept my expenditure within my income."

For the next twenty years the career of Charles James Mathews was that of a prosperous actor, relying chiefly on the well tried successes of former years, and occasionally essaying a new part. "Mathews was a man of the world and of his time," writes Charles Dickens, the son of the novelist, "As other people and circumstances changed, so did he. . . . Except for the unflagging vivacity, the irrepressible energy and the undaunted perseverance, which faced ill and good fortune with the same cheerfulness, there was little in the Mathews of later years to recall the struggling manager of the Lyceum, the hero of countless anecdotes of debts and duns and desperate expedients."

On his return to England, Mathews and his wife acted for some years at various London theatres, and in the provinces; and in the fall of 1861 they appeared in the Concert Room of the Haymarket in a series of 'At Homes,' modeled after those which the elder Mathews had made famous. The subject was the younger Mathews's life and adventures, and for two years Mr. and Mrs. Mathews 'At Home' enjoyed a metropolitan and provincial popularity.

In Sept., 1863, Mathews went to France and acted his own French version of 'Cool as a Cucumber,' at the Théâtre des Variétés. He was well received, in spite of the ridicule he had heaped upon the French dramatic authors in his pamphlet on the International Copyright controversy, published in 1851. In it he had declared that French pieces were not habitually

done into English, and that their frivolity and indecency would naturally prevent it—though he himself was presenting two plays from the French at the Lyceum at that very time, and most of the dramatic literature bearing his name was unblushingly taken from the same source. Charles Reade said of this pamphlet that it was a “sprightly tract, sensible here and there, downright funny everywhere, and supernaturally illogical.” Mathews returned to Paris in 1865, and played *Sir Charles Coldcream* (according to the Paris version) in ‘L’Homme Blasé.’ Sarcey maintained that he did the first act better than Arnal, the original exponent of the part, but thought that the Frenchman succeeded better in the second act. Arnal himself on the first night congratulated Mathews in his dressing-room.

Shortly after the death of his mother in 1869, Mathews made a tour of the world, playing with great success in Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii and America, opening at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York, in April, 1871, in ‘Married for Money’ and ‘Patter vs. Clatter.’ After an extended tour of the United States and Canada, he returned to New York and played a closing engagement at Wallack’s, taking his farewell of American audiences June 7, 1872, in H. J. Byron’s ‘Not such a Fool as He Looks.’

He returned to England, and from 1872 to 1877 played eight engagements under Hollingshead at the Gayety, with intervals of provincial tours. The year 1875 was distinguished by his first appearance in London as *Mr. Evergreen* in his new original comedy, ‘My Awful Dad,’ (he was then 72 years old), and by a flying trip to India, where he played in Calcutta before the Prince of Wales and an audience of

Maharajahs. His last appearance in London was at the Opera Comique, June 2, 1877, in the 'Liar' and the 'Cosey Couple.' His last appearance on the stage was at Staleybridge, June 8, 1878, in 'My Awful Dad.' A cold caught while driving from Staleybridge to Manchester resulted in bronchitis, and within a fortnight he passed away at the latter place, June 24, 1878.

Mathews left no successor, as he himself had succeeded no one. His style and methods were all his own, and it is no doubt owing to his singularity that he continued to attract and please his audiences until he died in the harness ; though the veteran of seventy odd must have lost much of the charm of voice and manner which had so distinguished the youth of forty, fifty or even sixty.

He essayed so many parts in the course of his long career, that in many of them he found rivals who left him far behind ; in all that required the touch of sentiment or pathos he was lacking. But in his own line of sparkling comedy he stood without a peer. Wherever he could infuse a part with the element of personal interest he excelled. "Of the most graceful type of comedy (not that of the old school which demands mock sentiment)," writes Shirley Brooks, "he was the most perfect representative I have ever seen."

HENRY GALLUP PAINÉ.

Lady Blessington in her Italian diary thus speaks of Charles Mathews's remarkable powers of mimicry : "We returned to Salerno ; the strangers who joined

our party at Pæstum being no less delighted than surprised by the extraordinary facility or felicity with which Mr. Charles Mathews personated different mendicants who had assailed us for alms on our route in the morning, and of whom he gave such imitations in the evening, that some of the party, who had previously bestowed their charity, reproached the supposed beggars for again demanding it on the same day."

'Memoirs of the Countess of Blessington,' vol. ii., appendix, p. 443, *foot note.*

There was a private friend, whom we will call Mr. Brown, from whom Mathews had borrowed five hundred pounds. Meeting him by chance, the comedian expressed his regret that he had not yet been able to repay the money. Brown pulled a long face, and, in a despairing tone, replied : "Oh ! don't talk of it ?" Mathews instantly seized the hand of Brown, and, in his emphatic manner said : "Well, we won't—we won't !"

HENRY TURNER: 'Random Recollections,' in *The Theatre*, Nov., 1885.

A correspondent writes : "Let me tell you a semi-theatrical story, which I do not think has ever been in print. When I was a boy I used to go to the office of an eminent firm of solicitors, the head partner in which used to give me tickets for the theatre. One day he asked me if I would like to see Charles Mathews. I replied in the affirmative. 'Well,' he said, 'I'm just sending a writ up to him, and I'll ask for a ticket for you at the same time.' I returned in the afternoon, and my friend handed me a pass for the theatre, and

at the same time gave me Charles Mathews's letter which accompanied it. The letter ran : 'Dear Blank —Herewith the ticket for which you have *writ*.' "

Whitehall Review, Jan. 28, 1886.

He was seen at his best, I think, during these Lyceum times. He was in excellent health and spirits, and his histrionic method, with all its gayety and sprightliness, was distinguished by a steady force and incisiveness which it lacked somewhat in later years. He even took his audience by surprise, developing unexpected resources, and essaying characters of an unaccustomed sort. He shone in melodrama. Mr. Lewes has described his performance of the *Count D'Arental*, the villainous hero of the 'Day of Reckoning,' an adaptation by Mr. Planché of a rather commonplace French melodrama. In the *Count D'Arental*, as in some other characters, what may be called without offence the heartlessness of the actor, was turned to theatrical account and made to serve tragic uses. His levity was no longer harmless and pleasant ; it was now allied to villainy and infamous cruelty. The audience did not much relish, perhaps, the change involved in this experiment ; yet it had its success from an artistic point of view and in relation to the fame of the actor.

DUTTON COOK : 'Hours with the Players,' "Sir Charles Coldstream."

The arrangements behind the scenes [Covent Garden] were admirable. The dressing-rooms were perfect ; the attendants well chosen ; "the wings" kept clear of all intruders—no strangers or crutch and

toothpick loafers allowed behind to flirt with the ballet-girls ; only a very few private friends were allowed the privilege of visiting the greenroom, which was as handsomely furnished as any nobleman's drawing-room, and those friends appeared always in evening dress. Dear old Charles Young (the tragedian), Planché, Sheridan Knowles, Leigh Hunt, Edwin Landseer and his brother, and a few intimate friends of Charles Mathews, were about all I ever saw there. There was great propriety and decorum observed in every part of the establishment, great harmony, general content prevailed in every department of the theatre, and universal regret was felt when the admirable managers were compelled to resign their government. Two more capable, competent, and admirable people never before or since managed a theatre.

JAMES R. ANDERSON : quoted in 'Life of Charles James Mathews,' *chap. xiii., foot note.*

His acquaintance with Mathews must have begun with Mathews's first visit to America, for I remember an anecdote he used to relate long before 1871. Mr. Fields had enjoyed Mathews's playing sincerely ; it seemed to him perfect of its kind. "Mathews," he exclaimed, when they met, "I enjoyed your performance beyond expression." "Ah, that is just it," said Mathews, "you don't express anything. How can your people expect to get the best out of an actor, if they don't speak or try to tell him so ! They will never know what we can do. It is impossible to give one's best under such circumstances."

ANNIE FIELDS : 'Biographical Sketch of James T. Fields,' pp. 124-5.

III.—14

As far as mere manners were concerned, except Mario, Mathews was the most perfect gentleman I have ever met. Whether his gentlemanliness was of the nobler kind, which rises straight from the heart, or the more polished but specious veneer accruing merely from good breeding and the distinguished society amidst which his earlier years were passed, it is idle to inquire now. Certain it is, he was nearly always a pleasant scoffer and a genial cynic. It is equally certain that he was the precursor of the modern fast young man, and the small funereally funny littérateur whose *metier* it is to ridicule and deride everything which is manly, and honest, and true. Though he was the Frankenstein on the model of whose monster these amphigamous creatures have formed themselves, I have reason to think that latterly he was by no means proud of his disciples. It could scarcely be otherwise, for he was always a gentleman.

"It is never too late to mend," and one of his most gracious acts of recantation took place a few years before his death, when he wrote my friend, Herman Merivale, a most graceful and appreciative letter touching that noble work, the 'White Pilgrim.'

JOHN COLEMAN, in the *Dramatic Review*, Aug. 15, 1885.

Charles Mathews was eminently vivacious ; a nimble spirit of mirth sparkled in his eye, and gave airiness to every gesture. He was in incessant movement without ever becoming obtrusive or fidgety. A certain grace tempered his vivacity ; an innate sense of elegance rescued him from the exaggeration of animal spirits. "He wanted weight," as an old play-goer

once reproachfully said of him ; but he had the qualities of his defects, and the want of weight became delightful airiness. Whether he danced the Tarentella with charming Miss Fitzpatrick, or snatched up a guitar and sang, he neither danced like a dancer nor sang like a singer, but threw the charm of a lively nature into both. But if no faults were discernible there, I now see, in retrospect, that it was the charm of the man rather than any peculiar talent in the actor which carried him so successfully through those little Olympic pieces ; and that when he began to try his powers in more exacting parts—such as *Charles Surface* for instance—there was the old elegance, but not the old success. Practice and study, however, made him an accomplished comedian within a certain range, the limits of which are determined by his singular want of passionate expression. No good actor I have ever seen was so utterly powerless in the manifestation of all the powerful emotions : rage, scorn, pathos, dignity, vindictiveness, tenderness and wild mirth are all beyond his means. He cannot even laugh with animal heartiness. He sparkles, he never explodes. Yet his keen observation, his powers of imitation and a certain artistic power of preserving the unity of a character in all its details, are singularly shown in such parts as *Lavater*, *Sir Charles Coldstream*, *Mr. Affable Hawk*, and the villain in the 'Day of Reckoning.'

GEORGE HENRY LEWES: 'On Actors and the Art of Acting,' chap. 6.

To the free expression of opinion I never object—nay, I have always courted it—and when a critic

really feels that in the characters I perform, and which were originally played by me in London, and even in the pieces written by myself, and the meaning of which I may consequently be supposed to understand, that I am inferior to other performers, I can only regret that I should not come up to his standard of excellence. It is too late for me now to change my style of acting, even were I so inclined. I do not pretend to be a physical force actor, my only aim is the agreeable and the natural; but I wish it to be understood that as far as I go, what I do I do on principle. The part of *Dazzle*, for instance, which I originally played in London, is, I am told, a failure, and that I do not make half as much of it as other performers have done. This is quite possible. But *Dazzle* is only a side part in a long comedy, and should occupy a subordinate place in the general composition, and I should as soon think of trying to elevate it into undue importance by exaggeration or buffoonery, as I should think of dragging the carrots and turnips of a Dutch picture so prominently forward as to destroy the effect of the principal figures.

It has also been urged against me that I always play the same characters in the same way, and that ten years hence I should play the parts exactly as I play them now. This I take as a great compliment. It is a precision which has been aimed at by the models of the profession, which I am proud to follow, and shows, at least, that my acting, such as it is, is the result of art and study, and not that of mere accident.

CHARLES JAMES MATHEWS: Speech at Boston,
quoted in the 'Life of Charles James Mathews,'
chap. 16.

As an amusing companion, next in order to Dickens, I should certainly rank Charles Mathews. I did not become intimately acquainted with him until he was nearly sixty-five, but I certainly never had a younger, more amusing, more vivacious friend. In his little house in Pelham Crescent, Brompton—which was crammed from attic to basement with works of art, most of them drawings made by young Charles Mathews when he went abroad with the Blessingtons to study architecture in Italy—he was the cheeriest and most agreeable of hosts. Smoking-capped and dressing-gowned—for he invariably declined, either at home or abroad, to give way to the conventionality of evening dress—seated at the head of his table after dinner with one of the worst cigars imaginable—his tobacco was the only bad thing in his house—in his mouth he would not only talk most admirably himself, but be the cause of excellent talk in others.

EDMUND YATES : ‘Memoir of a Man of the World,’
chap. 12.

And look at that—a picture of Charles Mathews—an old friend of mine. He was, undoubtedly, the founder of the present school of light comedy, and when he dies I know of no man who will take his place. His force consists in his excessive—well, I may call it his champagney airiness. Even at the present time, when he must be nearly seventy years old, he dashes on the stage with all the lightness and brilliancy of a lad of twenty. I never saw Charles Mathews attempt a serious part, and, in fact, there doesn’t seem to be one pathetic tone in his voice. Still I am sure that he would play a pathetic scene in

a perfectly natural manner. He don't know what it is to have low spirits. When imprisoned in Lancaster Castle for debt, with no probability of his being released for years, he was always as gay as a lark, and occupied most of his time in painting water-color sketches quite admirable in their character, the sale of which eventually enabled him to effect his release. [sic.]

E. A. SOTHERN, in 'Birds of a Feather,' p. 53.

A list, furnished by himself, shows that Mr. Charles Mathews has written, or adapted from the French for the stage, forty-three pieces—one piece in eight acts, one in five acts, six in three acts, thirteen in two acts, and twenty-two in one act. He has besides "created" the chief parts in one play of nine acts, one of eight acts, in ten of five acts, twenty-six of three acts, in forty-five of two acts, and in seventy-eight of one act; in all, one hundred and sixty-one parts. His most successful productions have been 'Black Domino,' the 'Milliner to the King,' 'Bachelor of Arts,' 'Court Jester,' 'My Wife's Mother,' 'Serve Him Right,' 'Little Toddlekins,' 'Platter vs. Clatter,' and 'My Awful Dad.' His most successful impersonations are *Puff* and *Sir Fretful Plagiary*, *Charles Surface*, *Mr. Affable Hawk*, *Sir Charles Coldstream*, *Dazzle*, *Twiggleton*, *Adonis Evergreen*, and his parts in 'Cool as a Cucumber,' 'Woodcock's Little Game,' 'Platter vs. Clatter,' and 'If I'd a Thousand a Year.' His clever version of Foote's comedy, the 'Liar' (produced at the Olympic in 1867), had a very successful run, and furnished proof of his practical skill as a dramatist.

CHARLES EYRE PASCOE: the 'Dramatic List,' *C. J. Mathews*.

WILLIAM E. BURTON.

1804—1860.

The drama flourishes, and one thing 's certain—
Wealth, taste and beauty throng to laugh at Burton.
There they behold great Shakspere's finest scholar,
A poet, and a wit, for half a dollar ;
There Shakspere, Sheridan, and Colman meet,
And you must early go to get a seat.
Rare son of Momus, may your shadow ne'er be less,
And we not die from laughing to excess !

JOHN KEESE.



WILLIAM E. BURTON
As Autolycus in "Winter's Tale."

WILLIAM E. BURTON.

William Evans Burton was born in London, Sept. 24, 1804, and died in New York, Feb. 10, 1860. He was the son of William George Burton, a printer, and author of a theological work entitled 'Biblical Researches,' published in the close of the last century. The son, with a view to the ministry, was classically educated in St. Paul's School, London, where the elder Mathews and Elliston had preceded him, and he was progressing in his studies, when his father's death summoned him from school, and he was forced to take the management of the printing-office for the family maintenance. He was then eighteen years of age. At this time a literary bent was manifested, and he tried the experiment of editing a magazine—the *Cambridge Quarterly Review*—which, though not a substantial success, disciplined his intellect, and made him known in literary and theatrical circles. It was at this period that he made a trial of his stage ability by playing with a band of amateurs, and the success of the venture was a foreshadowing of his destiny. In 1825 he adopted the profession, and joined a provincial company performing on the Norwich, Sussex and Kent circuits.

There is no record of these early performances; but it seems to be fairly authenticated that Burton aspired

to tragedy and essayed several parts in that direction. He probably soon found out the line of limitation, though he never, to the last, absolutely relinquished all desire for the graver walks of the drama. The manager of the company, Mr. Saville, was struck with the acting and method of the young aspirant, and offered him the position of leading comedian with the addition of "stage director." The offer was accepted, and the rounds of the provinces continued with varying success, the actor steadily gaining ground and adding largely to his repertory. There is a tradition that at this stage of his career he acted before George IV., in the private theatricals at the Court of Windsor Castle. At last he made his first appearance in London at the Pavilion Theatre, in 1831, playing *Wormwood* in the 'Lottery Ticket.' The engagement was a gratifying one, and enhanced his reputation. Liston, just twice Burton's age, was then at the Haymarket; and when in the following year he retired "through a pique," Burton succeeded him, to undergo the perilous ordeal of comparison with the veteran. Friendly criticisms were rewarding his efforts, when Liston returned. Burton again sought engagements in the provinces and in London, and was ripe for adventure, when Robert C. Maywood arrived in London from America in quest of dramatic talent, and Burton returned with him in 1834, making his first appearance in the United States at the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, on Sept. 3, of that year, playing *Dr. Ollapod* in Colman's 'Poor Gentleman,' and *Wormwood* in the 'Lottery Ticket.'

The recollection of Joseph Jefferson, senior, [1774–1832] was still lively at this time among play-goers in

Philadelphia ; but the native force and humorous capability of Burton conquered indifference, and it soon became known that an actor of rare endowments and promise had come from the land of Munden, Elliston, and Liston, one who might, it was not too much to say, worthily perpetuate the traditions of his great predecessor. The engagement with Maywood lasted two years, and was renewed for two more, during which period the comedian's powers greatly developed, and displayed remarkable versatility and dramatic resource. He widely extended his repertory, and was seen at the Arch and Chestnut Street Theatres in a variety of comedy parts and in innumerable farces. Among the many parts performed were *Ollapod* in the 'Poor Gentleman,' *Doctor Pangloss* in the 'Heir at Law,' *Farmer Ashfield* in 'Speed the Plough,' *Goldfinch* in the 'Road to Ruin,' *Billy Lackaday* in 'Sweethearts and Wives,' *Tony Lumpkin* in 'She Stoops to Conquer,' *Mawworm* in the 'Hypocrite,' *Sir Peter Teazle* and *Sir Oliver Surface* in the 'School for Scandal,' *Mr. Dove* and *Mr. Coddle* in 'Married Life,' *Dogberry* and *Verges* in 'Much Ado About Nothing,' *Launcelot Gobbo* in the 'Merchant of Venice,' and *Bob Acres* in the 'Rivals.'

While the comedian was thus advancing in his profession, and preparing himself for subsequent management, his pen was not idle, and he indulged the literary taste referred to at the beginning of this narrative. He wrote several farces and contributed stories and sketches to the periodicals of the day. These were collected and published in a volume entitled 'Waggeries and Vagaries.' He also started the *Gentleman's Magazine*, a monthly publication of original miscellany ;

edited for Carey and Hart the *Literary Souvenir*, an annual; and contributed to the *Knickerbocker* a series of theatrical papers styled the 'Actor's Alloquy.' Star-ring tours belong to the record of these years, and he was seen in the principal cities of the Union, with the exception of Albany and Boston, at which cities he never acted until 1857. His first appearance in New York was made Oct. 31, 1837, at the old National Theatre, in Leonard Street—then under the management of the elder Wallack—for the benefit of Samuel Woodworth, the author of 'The Old Oaken Bucket,' playing *Guy Goodluck* in 'John Jones.' His first appearance as a star was made at the same theatre, Feb. 4, 1839, when he played *Billy Lackaday*. He also appeared at Niblo's Garden as a star in this year, and was seen in a round of parts. He first appeared on the Park stage, June 2, 1840, for the benefit of Peter Richings, playing *Sir Timothy Stilton*, in 'Patri-cian and Parvenu.'

All this time Burton's home was in Philadelphia, and with that city he was identified for fourteen years. A break was made when he leased the rebuilt theatre (which had been destroyed by fire) at Church and Leonard Streets, New York, in which he made his first appearance, as stated, and his first essay as manager in that city. This was in March, 1841, and not in May, as generally recorded by stage historians, and it ended in calamity, for the theatre was again consumed, and with it all the scenery, books, and manuscripts. The manager returned to Philadelphia and began anew. The career of Burton during these fourteen years was full of activity and enterprise. He managed the National Theatre, Philadelphia, the Chestnut Street

Theatre, Philadelphia, the Front Street Theatre, Baltimore, and the theatre in Washington. In 1845-6 he was managing three dramatic houses, beside constantly acting, not only at his own theatres, but fulfilling outside engagements ; so that when he finally established himself in Chambers Street, New York, in 1848 leasing the building known as Palmo's Opera House, he was not unknown to fame, though there his richest triumphs and his greenest laurels were to be won.

Burton's Theatre in Chambers Street was opened July 10, 1848, and was closed Sept. 6, 1856. The eight years of its existence were full of fascinating dramatic events, and its records are a copious and important contribution to the annals of the stage. It was the school of many an actor who rose to fame, and the most famous actors of the time were seen upon its boards. It was the birthplace of plays and characters rarely equalled in their effect upon an audience, and its history is graced by a noble and poetical celebration of Shakspere's immortal works. Among many actors forming the company at various times were Henry Placide, William Rufus Blake, John Brougham, Lester Wallack, Lawrence Barrett, T. B. Johnston, Humphrey Bland, George Jordan, George H. Barrett, John Dyott, Lysander Thompson, George Holland, Charles Fisher, Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. Hoey (then Mrs. Russell), Mrs. Skerrett, Mrs. Buckland, Miss Weston, Miss Agnes Robertson, Miss Caroline Chapman, Miss Fanny Wallack, and Miss Mary Taylor. Here were produced 'Dombey and Son' and 'David Copperfield,' with the famous characterizations by Burton of *Captain Cuttle* and *Micawber*; the 'Serious Family' and the 'Toodles,' with the creations of *Aminadab Sleek* and *Timothy*.

Toodle; all the standard comedies were presented, with parts associated with Burton's name—such as *Mr. Sudden* in the 'Breach of Promise,' *Adam Brock* in 'Charles XII.,' *Van Dunder* in the 'Dutch Governor,' *John Smith* in 'Nature's Nobleman,' *Thomas Trot* in 'Paris and London,' *Triplet* in 'Masks and Faces,' *Toby Tramp* in the 'Mummy,' and many others. Here also were seen the careful and scholarly revivals of 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream,' 'Twelfth Night,' the 'Tempest,' 'Winter's Tale,' and the 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' with Burton in his impersonations of *Bottom*, *Sir Toby Belch*, *Caliban*, *Autolycus*, and *Falstaff*.

At the close of the Chambers Street Theatre, Burton moved uptown to the building originally known as Tripler Hall, which he had leased and opened as 'Burton's New Theatre.' The two years following were marked by a decline in the manager's fortunes; the audience missing in the spacious auditorium of the new house the home feeling which was peculiar to Chambers Street. There were changes in the company, too; old favorites had disappeared, and a kindred interest was not felt in new-comers. But with wonted energy the campaign began, and was continued on the old lines of attraction, with now and then a new sensation and occasional stars. In 1857 Burton played *Dogberry* for the first time in New York, and in the same year was seen in Albany for the first time, playing a round of parts; he also made his début in Boston, where his reception was extraordinary. It is not impossible that these starring tours suggested to the actor a lucrative field of activity, and perhaps some physical symptom dictated relief from the strain

and responsibility of management. From whatever cause, after another season of varying fortune, the new theatre was given up (1858), and he began a starring career which was destined to end untimely by the illness of which he died.

The last appearance of the comedian in New York was at Niblo's Garden, Oct. 15, 1859, where he was seen in the afternoon as *Timothy Toodle*, and in the evening as *Mr. Sudden*, *Toby Tramp*, and *Micawber*. His last appearance on any stage was at Mechanics' Hall, Hamilton, Canada, Dec. 16, 1859, where he played *Aminadab Sleek* and *Guy Goodluck*. He returned home from the trip in an almost exhausted condition, and, after lingering for nearly two months, suffering greatly, died at his residence in Hudson Street, New York City, of a malady of the heart, Feb. 10, 1860. His grave is in Greenwood Cemetery.

Burton was of the school of Munden and Liston; but he was also a school in himself. He created parts that seem to have died with him, and he was identified with many memorable dramatic triumphs. In versatility he was the peer of Joseph Jefferson, senior, [1774–1832] and of John Hodgkinson. The latter has been styled the prince of all actors of his period, and Burton in his prime was the prince of comedians. Few actors have left such a line of dramatic portraiture. His pictures from Dickens were careful studies, revealing fine sympathy and appreciation; his Shakspearean delineations were felicitous interpretations of the master's spirit; while in the range of comedy presentations there were exhibited a clear conception, an informing power, and a native faculty of execution that invested every part with unexpected humorous interest. If there was

not always complete identification, there was always a close approach to it, and added touches were visible in the portrayal that could ill be spared even for what was lacking to the eye of rigid criticism. In certain specialties, such as *Sleek*, *Toodle*, *Sudden*, *Van Dunder* and *John Smith*, he was unequalled ; they were absolutely his own, and died with him. It seems to have been conceded that in many of them the extreme limit of humorous demonstration was reached. In the extravagance of farce it was impossible to be funnier than he was. Mirth came from him in exhalations, and it goes without saying that the resources of by-play, grimace, and mimetic effect, were his at command. Other qualities of his acting were a simple and natural pathos, well remembered in *Captain Cuttle*, and an earnestness in the expression of homely feeling blent with dignity, effective examples of which were *Job Thornberry* and *John Mildmay*. Nor will it be forgotten that Burton was a scholar and a man of the world, and that his learning and knowledge of human nature went together in the shaping of his impersonations.

Burton in his prime was above the medium height ; rotund in form, yet not cumbersome. He had a large and well-balanced head; hair worn short behind, longer in front, and brushed smartly toward the temples ; a face clean shaven ; complexion bordering on the florid ; full chin and cheeks ; eyes blue or gray ; nose straight, and somewhat sharply inclined ; mouth large, the lips thin, and wearing in repose a smile half playful, half trenchant. Prominent among his physical attributes was a clear, strong voice, capable of a great variety of intonations ; and his delivery was such that no words of his were ever lost.

The ambition of Burton as manager was to organize and direct a first-class theatre. He believed that a company composed of members equally valuable in their respective lines and working under an efficient executive, was the best system of government for the growth and development of dramatic art ; and during his reign in Chambers Street, his idea was fully realized. He was a prime theatrical caterer. He had profited by experience, and understood stage effect ; he knew how a piece should be set ; he wisely disciplined his forces, and displayed good judgment in his distribution.

Burton was the author of the plays of 'Ellen Wareham,' the 'Ladies' Man,' and 'Forty Winks,' and may have written others. The first named had the distinction (and in this the records concur) of being performed at five London theatres on the same evening. It was first produced in May, 1833. The 'Ladies' Man,' and 'Forty Winks' owe what importance they have to the fact of their author having played *Daffodil Twod* in the one and *Tobias Munns* in the other.

To Burton's literary performances which have been chronicled above, may be added a compilation known as Burton's 'Cyclopedia of Wit and Humor,' published in New York—a repository of mirthful composition, and one of the best of its kind. The selections are made with discrimination, and the volumes show diligence and research.

Space will not permit an enumeration of the parts acted by Burton, and we think his range has been sufficiently indicated. An incomplete printed list gives one hundred and eighty characters, and *Sleek* and *Toodle* were acted respectively six hundred and six hundred and forty times.

Burton was a book-lover, and his literary taste found expression in a library comprising at one time nearly twenty thousand volumes. The department of the Drama was exceedingly rich, and the Shaksperean department was in some respects unique. The whole collection was of great interest and value. He had also many treasures of art and interesting relics. The library was contained in a separate building adjoining the actor's residence in Hudson Street. He also owned a country-seat at Glen Cove, Long Island.

Contemporary criticism is of one accord as to Burton's eminence as a comedian. No actor of his time so filled the public mind, and more than ordinary interest was excited by his performances. Time has not lessened his celebrity; and we believe that the intrinsic worth of his delineations will lend lustre to dramatic annals and ensure permanence to his fame.

WILLIAM L. KEESE.

Burton was probably the funniest man that ever lived. Certainly there lives no man to-day who can remember seeing or hearing of a man who was funnier than Burton. Burton in his day was the best known man in New York, if not in America; while Burton's Theatre in Chambers Street was better known throughout the United States, than any other public building in the Union, not even excepting the Capitol at Washington. Never came a stranger to New York, who ever went to theatres at all, but went to Burton's, and he had in his audiences many men who never entered theatre elsewhere, before or since. The very name itself is a synonym now for everything that is pleasant,

cheerful, funny in the past ; and if we would call up thousands of brightest reminiscences of uproarious farces, wittiest travesties, most sparkling comedies, we have only now to mention Burton's. Perhaps no theatre in the world, in so short a time, and with so brief a career, has formed for itself so world-wide and enduring a reputation as this ; and yet Burton's was only in existence for eight years, from 1848 to 1856; we refer, of course, to the Chambers Street House ; the Metropolitan on Broadway, his new theatre, while it was, it is true, for some seasons under his management, and bore his name, was never "Burton's." He was the greatest comedian of our day, and his place is not likely to be filled in our generation. No man now living will probably ever be able to affect so many people by his comic powers as could Burton. He newly-created many parts, and invested rôles with peculiarities and stage business of which the author never dreamed. His *Toodle* and *Sleek* were so absolutely his own, that the daring man who plays them now plays Burton's *Toodle* and Burton's *Sleek*, and not the *Sleek* of Morris Barnet's 'Serious Family,' or the *Mr. Tweedle* in the 'Broken Heart,' who was the present *Mr. Toodle* in 'Toodles,' as Burton found him.

Mr. Burton was a man of large culture, had collected a very extensive and valuable library ; and the care and correct elaboration of many of his Shakspearian revivals will testify how great he was as a Shakspearean scholar. Although they are not now remembered as are many of his other and characteristic parts, his *Caliban*, *Dogberry*, *Autolycus*, *Nick Bottom*, *Verges*, *Touchstone*, and his *Falstaff*, are by competent and

impartial judges said to have been among the most complete embodiments of the great poet's ideas, that his works have ever seen. We are all familiar with his pathos, and know that he could, if he would, move his great audiences to tears as readily as to laughter.

LAURENCE HUTTON : 'Plays and Players,' *chap. xxviii.*, pp. 236-7, 240-1.

No—*Bottom* is no stupid lout. He is a compound of profound ignorance and omnivorous conceit ; but these are tempered by good-nature, decision of character, and some mother wit. That which gives him his individuality does not depend upon his want of education, his position, or his calling. All the schools of Athens could not have reasoned it out of him ; and all the gold of Crœsus would have made him but a gilded *Bottom* after all. The race of *Bottoms* did not become extinct with *Nick*; nor have we reason to believe he was Nicholas the First. His descendants have not unfrequently appeared among the gifted intellects of the world. When Goldsmith, jealous of the attention which a dancing monkey attracted in a coffee-house, said, "I can do that as well," and was about to attempt it, he was but playing *Bottom*. As Mr. Burton renders the character, its traits are brought out with a delicate and masterly hand ; its humor is exquisite. But it is not well for any of us to laugh too much at it—it is not prudent ; for somebody may be by who knows us better than we know ourselves.

RICHARD GRANT WHITE : 'Shakspere's Scholar,' p. 211; New York, 1854.

But alas! one fatal day—*i. e.* to my happiness—the cast of ‘Nicholas Nickleby’ was placed in the greenroom, “*Scaley, Mr. W. H. N.*” What, said I to myself, I play *Scaley*—I, who made quite a hit as *John Browdie* at the Marylebone Theatre but a few years before—I, who had held such a position and with such a manager as Mr. W. Farren. My dignity was touched. I’d let him see. I would go home at once and write him a scorching letter that would give him a lesson for life. I put my resolution into effect and composed the following :

MR. BURTON :

My Dear Sir,—It was not necessity which drove me to America. I wished to travel, to see the country, and after having satisfied myself as to whether it pleased me professionally or otherwise, to arrange either to remain in it, or to return to England. I consider myself greatly insulted by being cast for the part of *Scaley*. To offer such an indignity to a gentleman who has held a good position in the Olympic Theatre, London, under the management of so great an actor as Mr. W. Farren, where he has played *Sir John Melville*, *Sir Lucius O'Trigger*, *Sir Arthur Lascelles*, etc., I consider a great insult, and positively request you to take me out of the objectionable cast, and in future keep to the promise you made on engaging yours,

W. H. NORTON.

I was perfectly satisfied with my effort, and dined comfortably in my apartments. Presently a tap at the door. Come in! A messenger, with an answer to my very severe letter, I dispatched with “All right!” opened the letter, and read as follows :

My Dear Mr. Norton,—When I engaged you I thought you were merely an actor. I find that you are a gentleman on your travels, and I have to apologize for detaining you. If you proceed, let me advise you to visit Niagara about this time. Take a tour through Canada. After that take your way through the

country generally, not forgetting the caves of Kentucky, and in mid-winter return to Niagara, a splendid sight. But should you feel inclined to defer your travels, W. E. Burton will be happy to retain your services until the close of the season.

What could I do or say? I literally roared with laughter. He had beaten me completely. I went early to the theatre that evening, and was leaning against a pillar when I was sensible of somebody having stationed himself near me. Presently the comical face of Burton turned towards me, and said, "Oh, Norton. Ah, I received a letter from you!" "Yes," I said as calmly as I could. "You got mine?" said Burton. "Yes," said I. "Now, which was the best?" said Burton, catching me by the arm. "Don't be a d— fool," he added, "come and take a drink." I did so. We adjusted the difference, and I remained with him for two seasons.

W. H. NORTON, in 'Era Almanack,' 1875, p. 31.

My first recollections of New York theatricals date back to Burton's Theatre, in Chambers Street, where he, great genius that he was, made you laugh, even if you were in debt, in disgrace, or suffering from the pangs of unrequited affection. Who that ever saw his 'Thousand Milliners,' or the 'Mummy,' can forget that face? His *Aminadab Sleek* was a side-splitting, breath-destroying performance. He was admirably supplemented by an actress—Mrs. Hughes—who was almost as funny as himself. She had a pale, rather flat face, but could make anything of it. She molded her features by the force of genius into all expressions. Burton once made a speech, in which he referred to their theatrical relations. "I have been her father,

her son, her uncle, her first husband, her second husband, and her third husband, her friend, and her disconsolate widower, and I have liked her better and better in each relation!" These two great theatrical geniuses made the town laugh for many years. . . .

The most superb performance of Burton's which I remember was his *Caliban*.

A wild creature on all fours sprang upon the stage, with claws on his hands, and some weird animal arrangement about the head partly like a snail. It was an immense conception. Not the great God Pan himself was more the link between the man and beast than this thing. It was a creature of the woods, one of nature's spawns; it breathed of nuts and herbs, and rubbed itself against the bark of trees. His reading was superb. *Caliban*, who learned to talk from *Prospero*, had an "elegant command of language," as Bozzy remarked of Johnson. Who that ever heard it can forget the unctuous richness with which he gave the line—

I'll take thee where the clustering filberts grow.

The contrast of the "ancient and fish-like" creature with the drunken *Trinculo* redounded to *Caliban's* advantage, and the exquisite contrast of *Ariel* was never made more manifest.

Burton called this revival 'A Tempest in a Teapot,' for his theatre was very small for a Shakspearean revival.

MRS. M. E. W. SHERWOOD, in the *New York Times*, June 20, 1875.

Mr. Burton's *Captain Cuttle* is perhaps the greatest and most faultless personation ever presented on any

stage. You can hardly believe but that identical "Edward Cuttle, mariner," stands before you, so true to nature is the representation. . . . As an actor he is well known to the public; and in a wide range of comic and essential parts is admitted to be without a peer. His conceptions are original and his personations remarkably free from mannerism. His humor is rich and racy. Indeed, if the success of an actor's comic exertions may be measured by the amount of merriment, the uncontrollable laughter he produces, then will it be difficult to speak of Mr. Burton in terms of praise too extravagant. His physique is admirably adapted to the character of his versatile personations. Mathews himself did not possess greater flexibility of features, and those who have seen Mr. Burton's *Ollapod*, *Dogberry*, *John Jones*, *Sir Peter Teazle*, will admit few actors can convey so much meaning by the shifting expressions of their faces. Much of the effect of his performances arises from the exercise of this faculty. We have seen him keep audiences in roars of unextinguishable laughter for minutes in succession, while an expression of ludicrous bewilderment, of blank confusion, or pompous inflation settled upon his countenance. His voice is strong, clear and musical, and capable of a great variety of intonations. Although his success has been marked in all his literary and managerial enterprises, it is as a comedian his talents especially qualify him to excel—it is on the stage his most lasting laurels must be won.

W. K. NORTHALL: 'Before and Behind the Curtain,'
pp. 111, 112.

I want to tell you why we have given this play [the



MR AND MRS. BURTON
As Sir Toby Belch and Maria in "Twelfth Night."

'Comedy of Errors'] the excellent cast and magnificent setting which you have for the past four weeks so generously acknowledged. Many years ago it was my good fortune to be associated, in an humble capacity, with the greatest comedian the English-speaking stage has ever known, William E. Burton. One evening after the great man had given a matchless performance of *Sir Toby Belch*, in 'Twelfth Night,' supported by an indifferent company of palmy-day players, he told me he had but one ambition, which he would surely gratify, as the coming event of his theatrical career, and that was to present 'Twelfth Night' with a competent cast, regardless of cost, and in a manner as near perfection as the possibilities of the stage would permit. "No good actor," said he, "has a right to die until he has done something good for his art." These words became indelibly impressed on me, and some years ago, when Mr. Crane and myself first appeared as the *Dromios*, we decided that as soon as our purses permitted, we would do something good. The result of that determination you have seen in this production.

STUART ROBSON: extract from speech at Star Theatre, New York, Oct. 3, 1885, published in *New York Tribune*, Oct. 4, 1885.

It annoyed Burton very much when, in the tag end of the play, certain of the audience began the bustle of departure, and he determined to embrace the first opportunity to administer a public rebuke. He had not long to wait. One evening, toward the close of the piece, the characters standing in order for the epilogue, an auditor arose in the gallery-front and began

to button up his coat. The comedian left his place and stepped to the footlights. "Excuse me, sir, but the play is not finished, and you disturb the audience. Have the goodness to sit down." The stranger, without pausing in his preparation, promptly replied : "Can't help it. I've listened to your infernal trash long enough, and now I'm going." "And what did you say, Burton?" exclaimed the late Henry Placide, who was one of the amused group. "Harry," said Burton, with an air of complete humiliation, "I couldn't say a —— word!" My father was quite right in thinking that the actor received on that occasion emphatically a curtain-lecture.

WILLIAM L. KEESE; 'John Keesee, Wit and Littérateur,' p. 73, New York, 1883.

It was a great treat to see Burton and Brougham together. The two actors were so ready, so full of wit, so alive to each other's points and by-play, that any fanciful interpolation of the text, or humorous impromptu, by the one, was instantly responded to by the other ; and the house was often thrown into convulsions of merriment by these purely unpremeditated sallies. And here we are reminded of an incident not down in the bills, which furnished an audience with an unlooked-for and affecting episode. It occurred during the performance of Colman's comedy of 'John Bull,' produced for the benefit of a favorite actor ; Burton playing *Job Thornberry*, and Brougham, who had volunteered for the occasion, appearing in his capital rôle of *Dennis Brulgruddery*.

Brougham was no longer with Burton—an estrangement existed between them of which the public was

aware—and the conjunction of the two actors naturally awakened a lively interest. It chances in the comedy that *Mary Thornberry* finds a refuge in her distress at the ‘Red Cow,’ and is greatly befriended by *Dennis*. Her father, discovering her there, and grateful for the service rendered, exclaims: “You have behaved like an emperor to her. Give me your hand, landlord!” Now, in the play, the reply of *Dennis* is, “Behaved!—(*refusing his hand*)—Arrah, now, get away with your blarney”—but Brougham paused for a moment before Burton’s outstretched hand, and then, as if yielding to an impulse, stretched forth his, and the two actors stood with clasped hands amidst an outburst of applause that fairly shook the ceiling. Of course they were “called out” at the close, and Brougham, in the course of a felicitous little speech, remarked—alluding, perhaps, to the success of his Lyceum not being all he could wish—that he had “lately run off the track;” to which Burton, in his turn, responded, by saying, “Mr. Brougham says he has ‘run off the track.’ Well, he *has* run off the track; but he hasn’t burst his boiler yet!”

WILLIAM L. KEESE: ‘William E. Burton, Actor, Author, and Manager,’ pp. 58–60, New York, 1885.

The death of the greatest comedian of our day leaves a vacancy on the stage that will not speedily be filled. So very peculiar was the genius of Burton, that there is probably no man now living able to affect so many people by his comic powers. To set a whole audience into convulsions of laughter before he had spoken a word, to keep the house roaring for hours together, to affect crowds by a glance, or a grimace,

or a gesture, so that they lost all control of themselves, was a nightly occurrence with him. He had as true a genius as Kean, although in another sphere. Teniers was as genuine a painter as Angelo. The secret of Burton's power did not lie in any single gift ; it was not only his mirth-provoking face, his ability to infuse character and comicality together into his countenance, though doubtless this was the most peculiar of his talents ; he had others. This indeed implied others. He could not have assumed so completely the hypocritical expression of *Aminadab Sleek*, he could not have represented so exactly the look of *Captain Cuttle*, the self-sufficiency of *Van Dunder* and the drunken leer of *Sir Toby Belch*, the lecherous gaze of *Falstaff*, and the vacant stare of *Tony Lumpkin*, unless he had first fully appreciated all these characters. The ability to portray them with such exquisite fidelity implied the power to distinguish their idiosyncrasies and the sentiment to appreciate them. But more than judgment or appreciation, Burton had a creative faculty. He often invented a part ; he often created a rôle. He did more for many of the characters he played than the author of the piece. His *Toodle* and *Sleek* were absolute creations, and indicated an ability quite akin to that of a great dramatist. He developed in one way, the writer in another, the ideas that filled the brain of each. For Burton was not a mere humorist. He was, of course, the most remarkable humorist of the times, the funniest man in the world, possessed at once of the keenest appreciation of the ridiculous and the most marvelous powers of exciting that appreciation in others ; but he had, also, wonderful insight into character, great imagination, though it was limited

in its sphere, and remarkable judgment in the matters pertaining to his art.

Besides the sympathetic power he possessed over the risible muscles of his auditors, which was completely irresistible, and which resulted not only from his facial expression, but from the expression emanating from his entire figure and person, Burton had singular vocal abilities. His tones, whether the boyish squeak of *Tony*, or the cracked notes of *Sir Peter Teazle*, were always wonderfully modulated, and exactly adapted to the part he assumed. Another physical peculiarity was the unctiousness of his manners. He had a way of exciting the most rampant fun, no matter what he did, or how he did it. His own personality somehow was infused into the character, though he was completely identified with the part. This was genius. He could play with success scenes of great pathos, and would often have brought tears to the eyes of his auditors were it not for their recollections of his more familiar comic scenes.

Sunday Times and Noah's Weekly Messenger, New York, Feb. 12, 1860.

In speaking of his *Magog*, the constable in the 'Wreck Ashore,' Mr. Rogers went on to say: "I had the honor of playing with him in that piece. It was at the Arch Street Theatre—and how I laughed! Quite as much as the audience did, I fancy. I can see him now, rehearsing a speech for the Westy dinner; his stupid look as he tried to arrange the speech. 'Overpowered as I am at the present moment' caught the pit, and I could see, as I peeped through the wings, that the people in the pit were laughing and

moving their faces in imitation of every change of Burton's. How could they help it? I had one scene with him—where the constable is drunk—and in the struggle I tried to lift him up off the stage. But it seemed to me at the time as if he weighed a ton, for all the time he was continually saying something comical *sotto voce*, and this, added to the laughter of the audience and their shouting, gave me a jolly time not easily forgotten."

Mr. Rogers says that in the season of '59 and '60 he again met Burton in Richmond. It was at the time of the hanging of John Brown, and the excitement had its effect in keeping the people out of the theatre. Besides a bad engagement, Burton was quite ill and had contracted a heavy cold, from the effects of which he never recovered. The play was 'Breach of Promise,' Burton playing the part of *Sudden*, and Mr. Rogers had an eccentric character which called for particular "business" in some of the scenes with Burton. One point depended on a wink. "In my anxiety," said Mr. Rogers, "I was about to speak my line, when Burton quietly whispered: 'Wait for the wink, my boy.' I did, and when he gave it, such a shout came from the audience that I fully realized the importance of so small a thing as a wink."

BENJAMIN G. ROGERS: Interviewed in *New York World*, March 29, 1885.

FRANCES ANN KEMBLE.

O precious evenings ! all too swiftly sped !
Leaving us heirs to amplest heritages
Of all the best thoughts of the greatest sages,
And giving tongues unto the silent dead !

How our hearts glowed and trembled as she read,
Interpreting by tones the wondrous pages
Of the great poet who foreruns the ages,
Anticipating all that shall be said !

O happy Reader ! having for thy text
The magic book, whose Sibylline leaves have caught
The rarest essence of all human thought !

O happy Poet ! by no critic vext !
How must thy listening spirit now rejoice
To be interpreted by such a voice !

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.



FRANCES ANN KEMBLE
As Euphrasia in "The Grecian Daughter."

FRANCES ANN KEMBLE.

Frances Ann Kemble was the eldest daughter of Charles Kemble. She was born in London Nov. 27, 1809. She seems to have been a venturesome and investigating child. At the age of seven she was sent to school in France, at first at Boulogne, and afterward at Paris. Here she took part in private theatricals, in which she revealed a full share of the histrionic faculty of the family. When she was between fifteen and sixteen, she returned to her father's house in London, where she studied by herself, read much, and began to write. When she was sixteen, she caught the small-pox, which robbed her of a beautiful complexion and marked her face. "Plain I certainly was," she has recorded; "but I by no means always looked so; and so great was the variation in my appearance at different times, that my comical old friend, Mrs. Fitzhugh, once exclaimed, 'Fanny Kemble, you are the ugliest and the handsomest woman in Europe!'" Before she was eighteen, she had written a poetic play, 'Francis I.', for which Mr. Murray paid her a good sum. In 1829, Covent Garden Theatre, of which Charles Kemble was part-proprietor, was advertised to be sold, and in the hope of retrieving its fortunes, his daughter was brought out as an actress. She made her first appearance as *Juliet*, Oct. 5, 1829,

when that house opened for the season. She was thought to resemble her aunt, who took a great fancy to her. Mr. Harness said that she looked like Mrs. Siddons seen through the diminishing end of an opera-glass. Her acting was less finished and more spontaneous than her aunt's, and she was not "all paw and pauses," as Mrs. Barry had said of the Kembles. So great was her success that she performed the part more than a hundred and twenty times. In the course of that season and the two following, she acted *Belvidera* in 'Venice Preserved,' *Mrs. Beverley* in the 'Gamester,' *Euphrasia* in the 'Grecian Daughter,' *Portia*, *Isabella* in the 'Fatal Marriage,' *Mrs. Haller* in the 'Stranger,' *Calista* in the 'Fair Penitent,' *Lady Teazle*, *Lady Townley* in the 'Provoked Husband,' *Bianca* in 'Fazio,' *Beatrice*, *Lady Macbeth*, *Constance*, *Camiola* in Massinger's 'Maid of Honor,' revived at her instance, *Louise* in her own play, 'Francis I.,' and *Julia* in the 'Hunchback,' then first produced. With her father she acted in Ireland, Scotland and the English provinces.

The same success followed her to America, whither she went with her father in 1832, making her first appearance in New York, at the Park Theatre, Sept. 18, as *Bianca* in 'Fazio.' "Her triumph here was complete," Mr. Ireland declares; "she was the acknowledged Queen of Tragedy from Boston to New Orleans, without a rival near her throne." She acted in the United States for two seasons, making her final appearance in New York, at the Park Theatre, June 20, 1834. She had married Mr. Pierce Butler, of Philadelphia, a fortnight before; and she was not seen on the stage again for a decade. During her

theatrical wanderings she had kept a diary, and in May, 1835, there was published in two volumes, the 'Journal of Frances Ann Butler.' This publication excited a sudden outburst of feeling which it is difficult now to understand. Mrs. Butler was with her husband on his Georgia plantation, during the winter and spring of 1838-9, and here again she kept a journal. This she refused to publish, until the Civil War; but when she found those whom she knew in England taking sides with the slaveholders of the South, she thought she had no longer a right to withhold her testimony as to the unspeakable wickedness and misery which she knew to be inseparable from slavery. In 1841, Mrs. Butler went back to England, and in 1846, she went back to the stage. She had paid a visit to Italy, and in 1847, she published the journal of this journey, under the title of 'A Year of Consolation.' Her divorce from her husband was pronounced in 1849. In 1848, she had played with Macready, at the Princess's Theatre in London. Since then she has not acted. "In the summer of 1848, I returned to America," she tells us in her 'Records of Later Life,' "where my great good fortune in the success of my public readings soon enabled me to realize my long-cherished hope of purchasing a small cottage, and a few acres of land, in the beautiful and beloved neighborhood of Lenox." Her poems had been published in 1844, and have been repeatedly reprinted since. Her second drama, the 'Star of Seville,' on a subject closely akin to 'Preciosa,' the 'Spanish Student,' and a play of Lope de Vega's, had appeared in 1837; and in 1863, she published a volume containing three more plays, 'An English Tragedy,' and adaptations of

Schiller's 'Mary Stuart' and Dumas's 'Mlle. de Belle-Isle.' Her final appearance before the public as a reader, was in 1869. Since then she has put forth two delightful books of autobiography, 'Records of a Girlhood' (1878) and 'Records of Later Life' (1882), and a volume of 'Notes upon some of Shakspere's Plays' (1882). The publication in 1863, of the 'Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation,' has already been recorded. Ever since her first visit to America, in 1832, Mrs. Kemble has vibrated between Great Britain and the United States, residing now in one country, and now in the other.

Mrs. Kemble has the high intelligence and the nobility of character, for which the Kemble family is noted, and as her birthright, she had a full share of the histrionic faculty; but her dramatic gifts were never purified and polished by the unceasing toil which alone may make an artist of the first order. She herself quotes Macready's remark that she did not know the rudiments of her profession. "I brought but one-half the necessary material to the exercise of my profession, that which nature gave," she confessed, "and never added the cultivation and labor requisite to produce any fine performance in the right sense of the word; and, coming of a family of *real* artists, have never felt that I deserved that honorable name." The reason of this failure is not far to seek, and she has given it to us. "My very nature seems to me dramatic. I cannot speak without gesticulating and making faces, any more than an Italian can; I am fond, moreover, of the excitement of acting, personating interesting characters in interesting situations, giving vivid expression to vivid emotion, realizing in my own

person, noble and beautiful imaginary beings, and uttering the poetry of Shakespere. But the stage is not only this, but much more that is not this ; and that much more is not only by no means equally agreeable, but positively odious to me, and always was." It was this hatred of the stage which kept her from holding the first place on it. That this hatred was genuine and of long standing, no one who has read her autobiography can doubt. That she should have succeeded on the stage, despite her distaste for it, is proof positive of the strength of her hereditary endowment. Her books are substantially autobiographic, taken either from her diaries or her correspondence, and reveal a woman of robust character, and of vigorous intelligence. She is truly womanly, but in no wise effeminate. Her mind is as fine in its texture as it is strong. She has great social gifts, and she has made friends in the best circles on both sides of the water. Nothing is more striking, as we read her 'Records,' than to note the number of distinguished people with whom she has associated : intellectually and socially she seems to have taken the highest position, and without effort.

BRANDER MATTHEWS.

My frame of mind under the preparations that were going forward for my début appears to me now curious enough. Though I had found out that I could act, and had acted with a sort of frenzy of passion and entire self-forgetfulness the first time I ever uttered the wonderful conception I had undertaken to represent, my going on the stage was absolutely an act of

duty and conformity to the will of my parents, strengthened by my own conviction that I was bound to help them by every means in my power. The theatrical profession was, however, utterly distasteful to me, though *acting* itself, that is to say, dramatic personation, was not ; and every detail of my future vocation, from the preparations behind the scenes to the representations before the curtain, was more or less repugnant to me. Nor did custom ever render this aversion less ; and liking my work so little, and being so devoid of enthusiasm, respect, or love for it, it is wonderful to me that I ever achieved *any* success in it at all. The dramatic element inherent in my organization must have been very powerful, to have enabled me without either study of, or love for, my profession to do anything worth anything in it.

But this is the reason why, with an unusual gift and many unusual advantages for it, I did really so little ; why my performances were always uneven in themselves and perfectly unequal with each other, never complete as a whole, however striking in occasional parts, and never at the same level two nights together ; depending for their effect upon the state of my nerves and spirits, instead of being the result of deliberate thought and consideration—study, in short, carefully and conscientiously applied to my work ; the permanent element which preserves the artist, however inevitably he must feel the influence of moods of mind and body, from ever being at their mercy.

FRANCES ANN KEMBLE : ‘Records of a Girlhood,’
chap. xi.

My dear aunt Dall and my maid and the theatre

dresser performed my toilet for me, and at length I was placed in a chair, with my satin train carefully laid over the back of it, and there I sat, ready for execution, with the palms of my hands pressed convulsively together, and the tears I in vain endeavored to repress welling up into my eyes and brimming slowly over, down my rouged cheeks; upon which my aunt, with a smile full of pity, renewed the color as often as these heavy drops made unsightly streaks in it. Once and again my father came to the door, and I heard his anxious "How is she?" to which my aunt answered, sending him away with words of comforting cheer. At last "Miss Kemble called for the stage, ma'am!" accompanied with a brisk tap at the door, started me upright on my feet, and I was led round to the side scene opposite to the one from which I saw my mother advance on the stage; and while the uproar of her reception filled me with terror, dear old Mrs. Davenport, my *Nurse*, and dear Mr. Keely, her *Peter*, and half the *dramatis personæ* of the play (but not my father, who had retreated, quite unable to endure the scene) stood around me as I lay, all but insensible, in my aunt's arms. "Courage, courage, dear child! poor thing, poor thing!" reiterated Mrs. Davenport. "Never mind 'em, Miss Kemble!" urged Keely, in that irresistibly comical, nervous, lachrymose voice of his, which I have never since heard without a thrill of anything but comical association; "never mind 'em! don't think of 'em any more than if they were so many rows of cabbages!" "*Nurse!*" called my mother, and on waddled Mrs. Davenport, and, turning back, called in her turn, "*Juliet!*" My aunt gave me an impulse forward, and I ran straight across the stage,

stunned with the tremendous shout that greeted me, my eyes covered with mist, and the green baize flooring of the stage feeling as if it rose up against my feet ; but I got hold of my mother, and stood like a terrified creature at bay, confronting the huge theatre full of gazing human beings. I do not think a word I uttered during this scene could have been audible ; in the next, the ball-room, I began to forget myself ; in the following one, the balcony scene, I had done so, and, for aught I knew, I was *Juliet*; the passion I was uttering sending hot waves of blushes all over my neck and shoulders, while the poetry sounded like music to me as I spoke it, with no consciousness of anything before me, utterly transported into the imaginary existence of the play. After this I did not return into myself till all was over, and amid a tumultuous storm of applause, congratulation, tears, embraces, and a general joyous explosion of unutterable relief at the fortunate termination of my attempt, we went home. And so my life was determined, and I devoted myself to an avocation which I never liked or honored, and about the very nature of which I have never been able to come to any decided opinion. It is in vain that the undoubted specific gifts of great actors and actresses suggest that all gifts are given for rightful exercise, and not suppression ; in vain that Shakspere's plays urge their imperative claim to the most perfect illustration they can receive from histrionic interpretation ; a *business* which is incessant excitement and factitious emotion seems to me unworthy of a man ; a business which is public exhibition, unworthy of a woman.

Ibid., chap. xii.

I saw Miss Fanny Kemble for the first time on Friday, and was disappointed. She is short, ill-made, with large hands and feet, an expressive countenance, though not handsome, fine eyes, teeth and hair, not devoid of grace, and with great energy and spirit, her voice good, though she has a little of the drawl of her family. She wants the pathos and tenderness of Miss O'Neill, and she excites no emotion; but she is very young, clever, and may become a very good, perhaps a fine actress. Mrs. Siddons was not so good at her age. She fills the house every night.

CHAS. C. F. GREVILLE: 'Memoirs,' Nov. 9, 1829.

We have had Fanny Kemble here last week. I only heard her 'Romeo and Juliet'—not less instructive, as her readings always are, than exciting, for in her glass Shakspere is a philosopher. I know her, and honor her for her truthfulness amidst all trials.

HENRY CRABB ROBINSON: 'Reminiscences,' vol. ii., chap. 25, 1855.

It never was our fortune to see Mrs. Siddons in this part, but Miss Kemble gives it a depth of tragic tone which none of her predecessors whom we have seen ever gave to it. Miss O'Neill, loth as we are to forget her fascinations, used to lighten the earlier scenes of the piece with some girlish graces that were accused of being infantine. Be that as it may, there were certainly a hundred little prettinesses enacted by hundreds of novices in the character which attracted habitual applauses, but which Miss Kemble at once repudiated with the wise audacity of genius; at the same time, though she blends not a particle of affected

girlishness with the part of *Juliet*, her youth and her truth still have in it a Shaksperean *naïveté*. As the tragedy deepens, her powers are developed in unison with the strengthened decision of purpose which the poet gives to the character. What a noble effect she produced in that scene where the *Nurse*, who has hitherto been the partner of all her counsels, recommends her to marry *Paris*, and to her astonished exclamation, "Speak'st thou from thy heart!" answers, "And from my soul, too, or else beshrew them both." At that momentous passage, Miss Kemble erected her head, and extended her arm with an expressive air which we never saw surpassed in acting, and with a power like magic, pronounced "Amen!" In that attitude, and look, and word, she made us feel that *Juliet*, so late a nursling, was now left alone in the world—that the child was gone, and that the heroic woman had begun her part. By her change in tone and manner she showed that her heart was wound up to fulfil its destiny, and she bids the nurse "Go in" in a tone of dignified command. That there was such a change in *Juliet* we have always felt, but to mark its precise moment was reserved for this accomplished actress, in a single tone.

THOMAS NOON TALFOURD: 'Miscellaneous Writings.'

And now for brief but heart-warm acknowledgments, and first to Miss Fanny Kemble; I owe her such a personation of my heroine, as—proud though I was of my offspring—I did not think that heroine afforded scope for. Her *Julia* has outstripped my most sanguine hopes! Can I say more? Yes; the soul of

Siddons breathes its inspiration upon us again ! The "Do it" of *Julia*, in the elocution of the actress, stands beside the "Hereafter" of *Lady Macbeth*—that instance of transcending histrionic display, which I never hoped to hear equalled.

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES : Preface to 8th edition of 'Hunchback.'

Miss Fanny Kemble did not disappoint expectation. Of higher praise she cannot be ambitious, for never before was expectation raised to such a pitch. She appeared on Tuesday, to a house which would have exceeded that attracted by her father, had it been possible ; for the anxiety to see the poet-actress, who so early in life has astonished and rivalled the finest and the oldest poets of her day, was even more intense than to see her father. It is exhilarating to behold, in a young country like ours, so true a feeling for all that is most exquisite in art. We doubt if London could give her a welcome more earnest, or applause more enlightened. Her person is *petite*, but our stage is not so large as to make that objectionable. Her action is most easy and elegant, with more of the French than the English manner in it ; and perfectly original in our eyes, accustomed as they are to something more staid and homely. They say that Madame Vestris, in England, is distinguished for having built her action upon a similar school ; but we are strangers to Vestris, and were she all that her most earnest admirers picture, she could not exceed, even if she equal, the grace and *deep* power of Fanny Kemble.

New York Mirror, Sept. 22, 1832.

The humors of a Dublin audience, much as I had heard of them before going to Ireland, surprised and diverted me very much. The second night of our acting there, as we were leaving the theatre by the private entrance, we found the carriage surrounded by a crowd eagerly waiting for our coming out. As soon as my father appeared, there was a shout of "Three cheers for MISTER Char-les!" then came Dall, and "Three cheers for MISTRESS Char-les!" then I, and "Three cheers for Miss Fanny!" "Bedad, she looks well by gaslight!" exclaimed one of my admirers. "Och, and bedad, she looks well by daylight, too!" retorted another, though what his opportunity for forming that flattering opinion of the genuineness of my good looks had been I cannot imagine. When I was acting *Lady Townley*, in the scene where her husband complains of her late hours and she insolently retorts, "I won't come home till four, to-morrow morning," and receives the startling reply with which *Lord Townley* leaves her, "Then, madam, you shall never come home again," one of my gallery auditors, thinking that I was wanting in proper spirit not to make some rejoinder, exclaimed: "Now thin, Fanny!" which very nearly upset the gravity produced by my father's impressive exit, both in me and in the audience.

FRANCES ANN KEMBLE: 'Records of a Girlhood,'
chap. xvi.

The acting of Miss Fanny Kemble was of a kind peculiarly entitled to be designated as spontaneous or gifted. She gave one the impression of a *born artist*, yet something too wilful withal. It was evident that

she had been well schooled ; but when the moment for displaying the results in practice arrived, she either forgot it, or did what she liked. She had none of the fine finish of intermediate parts and minor details which so eminently characterized the great predecessors of her family, and the sister who has last honored the boards by her presence. When there was little to say or do, she took no pains, and did it awkwardly, or anyhow ; when there was much to be said or done, she came out in the finest manner. She seldom did anything to help out a level scene. She let dullness take its course. She suffered the cloud to look like a cloud; but when the moment for passion came, her genius darted forth like a burst of sunlight. She was always great upon great occasions. She not only, what is technically called, "filled the stage," but her spirit filled the whole house, and every soul felt it.

MRS. C. BARON WILSON : 'Our Actresses,' vol. i., pp.
294-5.

JAN. 26, 1849. What glorious readings ! the spiritual *Ariel*, the stern *Prospero*, the lover *Ferdinand*, *Miranda* the beloved, *Stefano*, *Trinculo*, *Caliban*, each had a voice distinct and separate, as of many actors.

* * * * *

FEB. 5, 1849. Mrs. Butler read 'King Lear,' and wonderfully well ; with great power and pathos.

* * * * *

FEB. 18, 1857. At Mrs. Kemble's reading of 'Macbeth' at Tremont Temple. Just as she was giving the words of *Banquo* on first seeing the *Witches*—

What are these
So withered and so wild in their attire,

three belated women came trailing down the aisle to a front seat directly in the range of her eye. The effect was indescribably ludicrous.

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW: 'Journal and Letters,' 'Life,' by Samuel Longfellow, vol. ii.

Mrs. Fanny Kemble's reading of the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' backed by a performance of Mendelssohn's exquisite music to the play has filled Exeter Hall. The great beauty of the reading is the charm which Mrs. Kemble throws over the characters of *Hermia* and *Helena*, the clearness with which she distinguishes between them, and the completeness of her success in bringing out the character of *Helena* as something true and womanly.

HENRY MORLEY: 'Journal of a London Play-goer,' Feb. 10, 1855.

I repeat, it is unfair to compare Mrs. Kemble's reading with another's acting; but it is the highest compliment I can pay her. Without the adventitious aids of dress and scenery, she is able to bring up the various individuals of the play nearly as vividly as a stage-full of performers. You see and hear *Othello* and *Iago*, *Richard* and *Lady Anne*, *Prospero* and *Ariel*. You cannot avoid criticising her as an actress; for she possesses the marvelous faculty of expression in face and form, that is as necessary to an actress as intellect or voice, and contributes as much to success as either. She has also the power, which the very greatest geniuses of the stage possess, not only of enchaining the attention, but compelling an unconscious imitation of her looks in those of her hearers. I have at times

caught myself responding to her expression or copying with my own features the varying emotions depicted on her mobile countenance.

ADAM BADEAU: 'The Vagabond,' *Mrs. Kemble*.

Mr. Mitchell, who from the first took charge of all my readings in England, and was the very kindest, most considerate, and most courteous of all managers, on one occasion, complaining bitterly to my sister of the unreasonable objection I had to all laudatory advertisements of my readings, said to her, with a voice and countenance of the most rueful melancholy, and with the most appealing pathos, "Why, you know, ma'am, it's really dreadful; you know, Mrs. Kemble won't even allow us to say in the bills, *these celebrated readings*; and you know, ma'am, it's really impossible to do with less; indeed it is! Why, ma'am, you know even Morrison's pills are always advertised as *these celebrated pills!*"—an illustration of the hardships of his case which my sister repeated to me with infinite delight.

FRANCES ANN KEMBLE: 'Records of a Girlhood,'
chap. xii.

On the other hand, the very susceptibility and moodiness of temperament which prevented her from being always reliable, at other times ensured her a supreme success. Once, when she was acting at Covent Garden in a tragedy, in the last act of which there is a scene where the heroine is in prison awaiting the fate of her lover who has been condemned to death, but for whom she hopes a reprieve, she became so completely imbued with a sense of the reality of the

situation, that she lay on the dungeon floor in an agony of suspense which was almost unbearable ; and when at length her lover appeared, safe, forgetting the long and fine piece of declamation with which he was usually welcomed, she rushed into his arms with a cry of ecstasy, exclaiming, "Alive! Alive! Alive!" The audience were thrilled, as may easily be imagined ; and a moment after, such a thunder of applause broke out as had hardly ever before shaken the walls of Covent Garden ; and as Charles Kemble led his daughter before the curtain in answer to the repeated calls for her appearance, he said, "Well, Miss Fanny, you have made a new point indeed."

The Galaxy, Dec., 1868.

In 1848, she gave in Boston the first series of those readings which have made her name forever famous, and which have done so much to render Shakspere properly understood and appreciated. No other living being in this our day and generation, has been able to do for Shakspere what Mrs. Kemble, owing to the peculiar bent of her genius and her versatility of impersonation, has done. In listening to one of her readings, we have the unexampled pleasure of seeing one of Shakspere's plays, with each part superbly rendered. Yes, *seeing*, for do we not forget the dais upon which she sits, the dark red screen behind her, the table with its pile of books—do not these simple surroundings dissolve and melt away into arching forests or palace halls at will? and does not each character step before us in the costume of the day, whether it be *Cleopatra* dying amid long-forgotten Egyptian splendor, or *Titania* with her robe of woven moonbeams,

or *Bottom* with ass's head? Mrs. Kemble is independent of her surroundings the moment they are in her own power, and creates and changes them at will. And she is thus enabled to do for Shakspere what she could not have done had she remained on the stage; she gives us each one of his characters equally well played, a pleasure never yet enjoyed in the theatre; and I think we are scarcely less struck, on hearing her read any play of his for the first time, by her magnificent impersonation of the principal characters than by the way in which she brings out, individualizes, and makes real the minor ones—nonentities, some of them, in the hands of inferior actors, and very liable to escape us in reading.

In 'As You Like It,' *Rosalind*—lovely, arch, passionate, tender *Rosalind*—is not more real than *Audrey*—ignorant, humble, delightfully stupid *Audrey*. Not a word that *Rosalind* utters, and we think that she is among the most charming of Mrs. Kemble's impersonations, is more clearly impressed on our memory than the ineffable ignorance and stupidity expressed in *Audrey's* manner of uttering the words, "I do not know what poetical is. Is it honest in deed and word? Is it a true thing?" In 'Macbeth,' all the parts in which she makes as distinct as she does deeply tragic, *Lady Macbeth* is not more terrible than, in their way, are the three *Witches*. This whole scene, which Shakspere evidently did not mean to make grotesque, but terrible, is travestied on the stage; but in Mrs. Kemble's hands it is what it was meant to be, wild, weird, appalling. She is not simply a hag, she is a hag possessed by a fiend. What absolutely hellish joy lights up her face as she stirs the caldron!

With what an indescribable accent of malice and cruelty does she utter the refrain

Double, double, toil and trouble.

And this same face which can so embody the glare of a fiend, these lips which can utter a fiend's adjuration, can give the look, the smile of *Titania*, reproducing with equal fidelity the flower-like grace, the fairy-like evanescent loveliness of one of the most delicate of Shakspere's creations !

Ibid.

CLARA FISHER (MRS. MAEDER).

Childlike in hope and childlike in my fear,
A frolic thing of careless mind and age,
I claimed the stranger's welcome here—yes, here
Beneath *that dome* and on this *very stage*.

* * * *

The faces smiling on me then were strange ;
They are familiar now—but lo ! the change !

* * * *

The matron of that day is grandma now—
Walks with a stately step and turbaned brow—
Submits to glasses with reluctant grace,
And thinks the Theatre a shocking place. . .
The beaux that lavished blossoms at my feet—
That sported canes, and spoiled their snowy gloves
With clapping hands—who sent me verses sweet
On perfumed paper, sealed with hearts and doves,
Now turn away from *Pickle's* wildest prank,
And gravely talk about that Fiscal Bank.

* * * *

And though you smile upon me as before,
I am the “*infant prodigy*” no more.

ANN S. STEPHENS.

Sept. 28, 1841.



CLARA FISHER.

CLARA FISHER.

(MRS. MAEDER.)

On Dec. 10, 1817, at Drury Lane Theatre, London, was performed entirely by children, Garrick's dramatic romance entitled, 'Gulliver in Liliput,' altered for the occasion by Mr. Frederick George Fisher, father of Miss Clara Fisher, who in it personated the character of *Lord Flimnap*, the prime minister, and incidentally assumed the character of *Richard III.* and that of a countryman with a comic song.

The *Theatrical Inquisitor* of the day said that "the performance of these children was wonderful and did infinite credit to Mr. Corri, their instructor. . . . But the most extraordinary exhibition was the acting of Miss Clara Fisher in *Lord Flimnap*. Her measured stateliness of march and manner and her composed dignity throughout the part were wonderful. She afterwards gave all that bustling and difficult part of *Richard III.*, from the tent scene to the death, with a novelty of style, a truth of conception, and effectiveness of execution which might instruct and certainly did puzzle maturer minds. To complete the climax, she finally sung a comic song with an archness and humor which created as much amazement at the versatility, as had previously been excited by the

precocity of her powers. The audience was convulsed with laughter, and transfixed with astonishment."

This remarkable performance and enthusiastic criticism occurred sixty-nine years ago (1817—1886) when Miss Clara Fisher was not quite six and a half years old, for she was born—according to authoritative records—on July 14, 1811. But astonishment must increase when it is known that she is still pursuing her profession with all the vigor and skill and intellectual force that characterized her earlier years. Her career has been most singularly diversified, and extended for a period perhaps unprecedented in theatrical annals.

'Gulliver' was given on seventeen nights at Drury Lane, and immediately after was transferred to Covent Garden, where it was received with equal *eclat*. So marvelous was Miss Fisher's excellence in *Richard*, and so intense the curiosity to witness her performance, that applications for her services poured in from every quarter, and in the course of a few years, she had appeared with corresponding success in all the principal towns of Great Britain and Ireland; in fact she was the wonder of her times, and as a juvenile performer eclipsed all predecessors and has been surpassed by no successor. Three sisters of Miss Fisher appeared among *Richard's* Liliputian army, one of whom became Mrs. George Vernon, for many years an endeared theatrical favorite of the New York public.

After ten years of lucrative engagements throughout her native land, she sailed with her father's family for America, and on the stage of the old Park Theatre, New York, on Dec. 11, 1827, made her début as *Albina Mandeville* in the 'Will,' and the four *Mowbrays*

in ‘Old and Young,’ being then but little over sixteen years of age. Her success was again triumphant ; and for nearly seven years she was one of the most attractive stars that could be presented, and fully held her own against all opposing histrionic rivals. Though not possessing strict beauty of feature, she was at this time one of the most bewitching specimens of feminine creation that eyes had ever looked on. Her person, below the medium height and just reaching an agreeable plumpness, was exquisitely formed, her manners were sprightly and vivacious, yet perfectly natural and artless, her expression arch and intelligent, her cheeks dimpling with smiles, and her eyes were—

So modestly beaming,
Of mischief she could not be dreaming,
Yet many can tell, how fatal the spell
That lurked in the eyes of—

the song says “Kate Kearney,” but truth might justly, if not harmoniously, substitute the name of our fair heroine. Her boyish style of dressing her hair was immediately adopted by all fashionable young ladies, while an imitation of her slight natural lisp was considered by some equally indispensable. In fact she belonged to the royal family of Lions, and her name was borrowed to give popularity to new fashions and old hotels, slow stages and fast racers ; and anything or anybody that could claim the most distant connection with the “celebrated Clara Fisher” was sure of attracting notice and distinction.

The lines of characters in which she appeared with most success were the same in which Mrs. Jordan and Madame Vestris achieved their greatest triumphs—the former as the true actress of nature, the latter as

the most elaborate exemplar of artificial life. Clara Fisher was nature itself in the mischievous boys and romping girls of the stage, while the pert chambermaid and the belle of the salon were hit off with an unexampled fidelity. Her best character in tragedy was *Ophelia*, which she played with the most winning grace and touching simplicity ; her *Viola* too was a beautiful personation, yet she was more admired in the more every-day character of *Clari, the Maid of Milan*, which she gave with a pathos so natural and irresistible, that few eyes refused the tribute of a tear. In the fashionable lady of high comedy, she had all the ease and elegance requisite for the part, while her diminutive figure lent no aid to support its dignity, yet her *Lady Teazle* was highly applauded, and her *Lady Gay Spanker* developed far more delicacy and refinement than its first American representative ever bestowed upon it. In opera she appeared to every advantage that a thorough knowledge of music with a limited extent of voice permitted, but her best vocal efforts were found in those ballads to which her inimitable expression gave a long enduring popularity.

After her marriage in 1834 and subsequent decline in stellar attraction, Mrs. Maeder became in succession the leading lady of the leading theatres in nearly every prominent city in the United States, and in leading characters supported the most eminent foreign and native artists that have adorned the American stage ; until warned by advancing years and the innumerable hosts of younger aspirants, she gradually dropped her youthful parts and became the successful representative of the stage old lady. Her married life was singularly happy until the death of Mr. Maeder, a

musician and composer of distinction, in 1876; but she still enjoys the love and respect of a numerous family circle, which justly regards her as its chiefest pride and blessing.

JOSEPH NORTON IRELAND.

November, 1885.

Miss Clara Fisher, when only six years of age, was indeed a *rara avis*; and the judicious manner in which she was placed before the public aided her success. In *Lord Flimnap*, her assumption of the character of *Richard III.*, surrounded by his pigmy warriors, was perfect—as the performance of a Liliputian, it was faultless ; as a child aping a man, it would have been ridiculous. No child was better schooled or reflected more credit upon her preceptor ; her powers of imitation were carefully developed, exciting the wonder of the critics of London, who pronounced her a Kean in miniature.

F. C. WEMYSS : 'Twenty-six Years of the Life of an Actor,' pp. 148-9.

The re-appearance of Miss Clara Fisher has had quite a revivifying effect upon the affairs of this house [Park Theatre], and her admirers crowd the theatre every evening she appears. We know of no one who is likely to prove such an enduring favorite as Miss Clara, because we know of no one who possesses versatility of talent in an equal degree. When looking at her, admiration is an involuntary act—you cannot help yourself. And her singing too—how agreeable—how very agreeable. The 'Bonnets of

Blue' for instance. Shut your eyes and there are twenty people can sing it as well—open them, and who is there to equal her? No one. The action is everything—and her action during this song is perfect. It is all that is graceful, spirited and appropriate in gesture. Had she lived in the time of "the Pretender" every toss of her little head would have made a convert to the cause of "Charlie, the chief o' the clan."

New York Mirror, March 22, 1828.

Miss Clara Fisher. This young lady took a farewell benefit at the Park, on Monday evening [Nov. 30, 1829], prior to her departure for New Orleans, and we dare venture to say that that theatre never contained a more brilliant and fashionable audience. The house was crowded in every part. We have so often stated our opinion of this wonderful girl—so often expressed our admiration in no measured terms of her singularly beautiful and fascinating performances, that anything we might now add would be little more than a repetition of what has been formerly said. Every engagement raises her higher in the estimation of the public and discloses some fresh vein of original talent. Perhaps there never was an actress with such a flow of spirits, so wild, so gay, so full of joyous animation, and at the same time so extremely judicious; in the very heyday of her glee she never "o'ersteps the modesty of nature," and she can venture to the very bounds of propriety, without going an iota beyond them.

Ibid., Dec. 14, 1829.

An anecdote has been related to us, in connection

with the lady's coolness and presence of mind (when a child), which we may give without offending the reader. . . .

Once when acting *Shylock*, in the trial scene, the scales the infant actress had been furnished with for the weighing of *Antonio*'s flesh got vexatiously entangled. In this scene, we need scarcely remind play-goers, *Shylock*, when judgment is recorded in his favor, has to make a rush at the merchant, and to exclaim at the moment something indicative of his (the Jew's) eagerness to commence his work. To have attempted this without both knife and scales in readiness would have been to upcall a general titter. Only a few lines of intervening dialogue had to be duly emphasized; still the scales were knotted by their chains together. In such a dilemma many an old stager would have been in despair, or, as a last resort, would have twisted and turned the scales about, in the shadowy hope of bringing them back to propriety. Miss Clara Fisher, however, did neither one nor the other. Coolly she set herself to the work of disentanglement, and at last succeeded. The scales swung apart at her cue, and *Shylock* prepared for her (or his) work, properly qualified, which many *Shylocks* on the greater stage of life are not.

‘Actors as They Are,’ New York, 1856.

A large and fashionable audience assembled on Monday evening to witness the ‘first performance this season of “everybody’s favorite,” Miss Clara Fisher. She appeared in the character of *Beatrice* in Shakspere’s comedy of ‘Much Ado About Nothing.’ The part of *Benedick* was sustained by Mr. Caldwell, of the

New Orleans Theatre. The amusing afterpiece of the 'Invincibles' was also produced, for the purpose of introducing Miss Fisher as *Victoire*, one of those playful and happy exhibitions of beautiful and graceful acting for which this young girl has become so deservedly celebrated. We do not deem *Beatrice* a part calculated to display her powers to the greatest advantage, although it may be observed of her, that even when the decree of the manager takes her from the range of the drama for which nature and study have fitted her, she is still correct, interesting, and delightful; never losing sight of the good sense which may be found tempering her most unaccustomed as well as her most familiar and successful efforts. The scene where she beseeches *Benedick* to kill *Claudio* is precisely of a kind most opposite to her powers. Neither nature nor education has fashioned the charming and youthful creature before us to portray the blood-thirstiness of that *amiable* lady. Yet even here, although of all the circumstances in which fancy could picture her, that of "eating a man's heart in the market place" would be the last, she was admirable, particularly towards the close of the scene; and, altogether contrary to our expectations, just what she should have been.

In *Victoire* she was, as usual, full of grace and spirit. We should like to see her perform with young Kean. Such an arrangement could not fail to afford universal satisfaction. The most beautiful characteristic of the style of her acting is the play of her features, the continued and continually changing expressions which follow each other over her face, with all the different shades of feeling and passion, of surprise, fear, hope,

archness, and anger, which it is her wish to represent. Her countenance seems as admirably created for the display of all the varying operations of the soul, as a stream in summer to reflect the images of the scenery above and around it. For example, watch her looks when she snatches the stanzas from *Benedick*, the joy and triumph beaming in her eyes, and the light of successful vanity and love gleaming altogether from her radiant face ; then, when her own verses are produced, and seized by *Benedick*, mark the change—rapid and complete as the workings of thought—and then the gradual yielding, as the archness and merriment break forth again, and she accepts him—“out of pity, for they told me you were in a consumption !” Again, in the little corporal, when she comes forward disappointed, angry, and perplexed, and suddenly thinks of the general’s letter, which that incautious old gentleman had committed to her care. How palpably you may read her thoughts, as she turns it over and over again—starts, listens, and exclaims, “Oh ! it is open !” These sweet touches of nature are scattered all over her representations, as thick as wild flowers in a summer meadow. We have never seen them equalled ; and however there may be parts too cumbersome for her management, which require stronger physical construction, and a loftier style of imagination, the drama abounds with characters of the most agreeable description, which may be appropriated exclusively to her. She is the cherished favorite of the public, and holds a place in their esteem, which it will take any other many a long year to reach.

New York Mirror, Sept. 11, 1830.

She played with me for six weeks to a succession

of overflowing houses. Nothing could exceed the enthusiasm with which this most amiable creature was received everywhere. "Clara Fisher" was the name given to everything it could possibly be applied to : ships, steamboats, race horses, mint juleps, and negro babies. Charles Fisher established a newspaper in New York called *The Spirit of the Times*, and to secure popularity to it and himself, advertised it as "edited by C. J. B. Fisher, brother to the celebrated Clara Fisher." A hack proprietor started an omnibus and of course called it "Clara Fisher," and another had another called "The Celebrated Clara Fisher;" and another yet, determined not to be outdone, named his "Brother to the Celebrated Clara Fisher." On the afternoon of her first performance I got a note from John Quincy Adams, then the President, asking for a certain box for that evening, and directed to "Mr. Manager of the Theatre ;" and I sent a reply regretting that he couldn't have it till five nights afterwards, directed to "Mr. Manager of the United States."

JOE COWELL : 'Thirty Years Passed Among the Players,' vol. ii., chap. x.

Mrs. James G. Maeder (formerly Miss Clara Fisher) was one of the bright stars of our theatrical firmament, whose acting as a child of twelve or thirteen in *Richard III.*, and as the representative of various juvenile characters—often appearing in four or five parts in the same piece—had brought her fame and fortune. She was no less remarkable for her performance in high comedy, and in light characters in English opera.

J. E. MURDOCH : 'The Stage,' chap. xii., p. 234.

Clara Fisher, on one occasion, sang what was intended to be a ludicrous appeal for sympathy, with such wonderful truthfulness of suffering, that a majority of the audience were overcome with tears.

H. D. STONE: 'Theatrical Reminiscences,' *chap. i.*, p. 10.

The opening address, which was written by Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, was spoken by Mrs. Maeder, the Clara Fisher who, in her childhood and girlhood, had delighted, upon both sides of the sea, so many audiences. She played that night the *Widow Cheerly* in the 'Soldier's Daughter'—old Manager Cherry's old-fashioned comedy. She had not then lost altogether her girlish *esprit*. She came gliding upon the scene full of life and laughter, a perfect mistress of her art, so that we deemed every motion graceful and every tone delicious. Her early theatrical training had made her an adept in all the business of the stage; she was still a little queen—or at least we thought so—we boys gazing at her from the pit. She was at once pathetic and humorous, now serious and then full of badinage and elasticity, always showing traces of that dainty taste and *naïveté* which years before had turned the heads of numberless young gentlemen. We did not mind how old she was—she was young enough for us. Her husband was one of the managers of the theatre, and she worked like a slave all through the season to sustain its dubious fortunes, playing everything from *Desdemona* to *Myrtillo* in the 'Broken Sword'; and as the receipts grew smaller and smaller, she toiled cheerfully, though perhaps she had some sad recollections of the time when a mob gathered

about the box-office to secure tickets for her performances, and when hornpipes and the four-footed favorites of the turf were named after her both in England and America. Turn over any rubbishy lot of old plays in a second-hand bookstore and the odds are that you will find her portrait in character. She outlived her girlish glories, but it must have been to her some consolation that she had been so honestly and justly admired, and had given so many pleasure-seekers that which they sought for. In spite of the temptations which beset her, she kept her honest name ; and those who talk foolishly about the immorality of the stage may be surprised and perhaps pained to learn that she was a good wife, a good mother and a good woman altogether.

CHARLES T. CONGDON : 'Reminiscences of a Journalist,' *chap. xiii.*, pp. 175-7.

I performed *Charles Paragon*, her lover, and I thought the man who could not love such a woman must be made of galvanized India-rubber. Clara Fisher, as a comedy actress, in such characters as she generally appeared in — particularly those that were originally written for, and played by the celebrated Mrs. Jordan — has never been approached in excellence in this country by any one, excepting, perhaps, Mrs. Fanny Fitzwilliam, who came about twelve years later to America ; but Miss Fisher had the advantage of more youth and beauty, and more refinement in her style of acting.

N. M. LUDLOW : 'Dramatic Life As I Found It,' *chap. xxxvi.*

JOHN BROUGHAM.

1810—1879.

I.

If buds by hopes of spring are blessed,
That sleep beneath the snow,
And hearts by coming joys caressed,
Which yet they dimly know,—
On fields where England's daisies gleam,
And Ireland's shamrocks bloom,
To-day shall summer, in her dream,
Be glad with thoughts of Brougham.

* * * *

V.

He comes, whom all the rosy sprites
Round Humor's throne that throng
Have tended close, through golden nights
Of laughter, wit, and song :
Whom love's bright angels still have known —
He ne'er forgot to hear
The helpless widow's suppliant moan,
Or dry the orphan's tear.

* * * *

X.

And whether back to us he drift,
Or pass beyond our view,
Where life's celestial mountains lift
Their peaks above the blue,
God's will be done ! whose gracious will,
Through all our mortal fret,
The sacred blessing leaves us still,
To love—and not forget.

WILLIAM WINTER.



JOHN BROUGHAM.

JOHN BROUGHAM.

John Brougham was born in Dublin, May 9, 1810. Coming from a good Irish family on his father's side, his mother being the granddaughter of a French refugee who had settled in Dublin, the son combined the best of both strains, in this beneficent blending of blood. He showed his artistic bent at an early age, and drew and painted while yet a boy ; and was, even then, fond of the theatre. He studied for a while at the preparatory academy of Dr. Hamilton, about twenty miles from Dublin; but soon ran away, back to his home, with his younger brother, a delicate lad, whom John had rescued from a beating at the hands of a tyrannical usher; the fight and the flight as told by him recalling the similar scenes in *Nicholas Nickleby*. After cramming at home, he entered "The College of the Holy and Undivided Trinity"—as its title was given by Queen Elizabeth, its founder—where he did little study, but acquired a good stock of knowledge "by absorption," as he used to say. He consorted with congenial cronies there and with them was wont to frequent the shilling gallery of the little Theatre Royal in Hawkins Street. He occasionally played in private theatricals, at this time, at a wretched den of a theatre in Tattersall Street. He was, of course, fond of tragic parts, having the customary weakness of comic

actors at their start. This was, however, good training for him, and helped him to overcome the stage fright with which he was afflicted ; and the training soon came into use. For sudden family and pecuniary misfortunes now forced him to give up his studies in surgery—to pursue which, he had “walked the hospital” in Peter Street for eight months—and to go to work in earnest. It is related that he first tried to enlist as a cadet in the East India Company, and was sent off, with a guinea and good advice to seek a better future, by a good-hearted recruiting officer ; to whom he and we ought to be forever grateful ! Brougham made his way to London in 1830, and by help of a friend was “taken on” at the little Queen’s Theatre in Tottenham Street—since famous, under the Bancrofts, as the Prince of Wales’s—where he was set to playing from six to a dozen parts, each evening, in Moncrieff’s operatic extravaganza of ‘Tom and Jerry,’ then the rage of the town. Soon after, he joined the company at the Olympic, under Madame Vestris—then at the top of the popular wave—and later went with her and Charles Mathews to Covent Garden, remaining a member of their company during their whole management there, playing all sorts of parts, and gaining reputation steadily. In the first full play-bill of Vestris to be found now, we read that in ‘Olympic Revels,’ *Mars* was played by Mr. Brougham. In the summers, he toured through the provinces ; and in 1840, he undertook the management of the Lyceum. We know nothing of the details of this episode ; but it did not last long, and was, presumably, a financial failure : as, indeed, were all his managerial enterprises. He had no business ability ; he trusted everybody,

showing no prudence, and taking no precautions ; and all his life—and it was a comfort and a consolation in his chequered career—he kept this same cheerful, careless, cordial, confiding, uncalculating candor.

During these busy years of acting, his pen had not been idle, and had produced many now-forgotten trifles ; among others, a burlesque for Wm. E. Burton, then a member of the stock company of the Pavilion Theatre in Whitechapel. It was his first play and a poor one, he tells us ; but it was a popular success. He also helped Mark Lemon write the 'Demon Gift,' and Dion Boucicault with 'London Assurance.' For this last, he was characteristically refused all credit and all compensation ; until, threatening an action, he was paid one half the sum received from the sale of the piece, by Boucicault's lawyer, who knew that his client had no case. Brougham used to say, in later years, that he had been paid not to claim his share of the credit of this authorship, and that he had loyally kept his bargain !

In 1842, he sailed with his wife for New York, and appeared, at the old Park Theatre, in October of that year ; and from that night, for almost forty years, his name held a high place in the dramatic annals of America as actor, author, manager. They played 'Love's Sacrifice,' on that first night, Mrs. Brougham taking the part of *Margaret Elmore*, he having some light comedy part, and not making much impression in it. But he took the house by storm in the afterpiece, 'His Last Legs ;' in which he played *O'Callaghan*, an admirable part, and a favorite of his to the very last. He soon won his way to the heart of the New York public ; being assisted thereto by Willis and Morris,

then the fashionable journalists of the town, who took great interest in his early career there.

Later, he starred through the country as far west as St. Louis, having rough roads, shabby theatres, queer experiences, but making much money ; all of which he soon paid for the pleasure of learning the science and the art of poker, on the Mississippi. In 1848 he was playing in the old Boston Theatre, and a bill, on Feb. 3 of that year, shows him to have been cast in five parts in four plays ; one of which was his own, ‘Metamora, or the last of the Pollywogs,’ doubtless his first aboriginal burlesque.

Back again in New York, we find him at the Broadway Theatre, nearly at the corner of Leonard Street, opposite the New York Hospital ; where he produced his ‘Romance and Reality,’ with some success. Then he became stage-manager for his London friend, Wm. E. Burton, who now had his own theatre in Chambers Street ; receiving fifty dollars a week as manager, and ten dollars a night for his ‘Dombey & Son,’ written for Burton, whose fortune it founded by its run, and whose fame it fixed by his *Captain Cuttle*. Brougham’s *Bunsby*, however, and his *Bagstock* were both as great comic creations in their way.

Next was produced the English adaptation of ‘Le Mari en Campagne’—the ‘Serious Family’—and in it Brougham found a part fitting him like his skin—that of *Captain Murphy Maguire*. He produced his burlesque, ‘Don Scissors de Bassoon,’ and other ‘unconsidered trifles,’ during the two seasons he remained with Burton. He next took the management of Niblo’s for a while ; then, helped by moneyed friends, opened on Dec. 23, 1850, the little theatre in Broadway, next

to the corner of Broome Street, which he was glad to be able to call Brougham's Lyceum. Here he acted, as well as managed for a while; dramatized 'David Copperfield'—in which he was incomparable as *Mincawber*;—adapted the 'Actress of Padua,' for Charlotte Cushman; and produced many squibs and light pieces. In a very short time, however, the usual money troubles set in, and through the sharpness of "a friend," he was thrust out of the theatre, with a heavy load of debt; to become free from which needed years of his best life's work. He took the Bowery at once, and produced 'King John,' with such scenery, costumes and cast as New York had never seen: but it was a fated financial failure. To remedy this, he wrote and produced, in rapid succession, such sensational pieces as the 'Pirates of the Mississippi,' the 'Gunmaker of Moscow,' 'Tom and Jerry in New York,' and others of that style: all artistically successful, and all leaving him with an empty exchequer at the end of the season. So he gave up managing, and enlisted under the Wallack banner, in 1852, in his own former theatre, now taken by the elder Wallack. Here he found his right place, working peacefully for several years under pleasant conditions, with a good salary, his name always conspicuous on the play-bills, endearing himself constantly to his audiences. He appeared regularly in his favorite parts, and created many new ones during this period; here, too, he produced some of his best plays, such as the 'Game of Love,' 'Game of Life,' 'Bleak House,' 'A Decided Case,' the 'Ruling Passion,' 'Playing with Fire,' and his "grand or-and-abor-iginal burlesque, 'Pocahontas.'" In 1852 he started *The Lantern*,

a really comic paper, but one which died an untimely death, not very long after its birth.

Having paid to the uttermost his long-carried debts, Brougham again joined Burton's company in 1857; at Burton's New Theatre, formerly the Metropolitan Theatre, later the Winter Garden: where now stands the Grand Central Hotel. With Burton, he played many uproariously funny parts, and wrote some topical comical skits, such as the 'Great Tragic Revival,' 'This House to be Sold,' and his burlesque 'Columbus.' On the outbreak of the Civil War he went to London, and played at the Haymarket, the Lyceum, and the Princess's. At the former, Buckstone brought out 'Romance and Reality,' which had secured a success in America; and was astounded at his own stupidity, when he learned that he had refused it years before Brougham took it to New York with him. At the Lyceum, he wrote for Fechter the 'Duke's Motto'—an adaptation of Paul Féval's 'Le Bossu'—for which he received one box of cigars. It was produced on Jan. 10, 1863, Brougham playing admirably the soldier of fortune, *Carrickfergus*. In Oct., 1863, also for Fechter, at the Lyceum, was brought out his 'Bel Demonio'—an adaptation of 'L'Abbé de Castro,' already conveyed in 1851, by Dion Boucicault at the Olympic, and called the 'Broken Vow.' In this, Brougham played the *Cardinal*: "excellently made up and acted," said *The Times*. He appeared at the Princess's, on March 22, 1865, as *Col. O'Grady*, in 'Arrah-na-Pogue.' At the same theatre, he had already (Sept. 28, 1861,) produced his own best play, 'Playing with Fire;' the merits of which, as well as of his performance of the part of *Dr.*

Savage, being recognized in London, as they had been in New York long before.

He also appeared in the provinces, during this stay in England, and brought out two volumes of his scattered sketches—‘A Basket of Chips,’ and the ‘Bunsby Papers.’ In addition to his new plays, he wrote the words for three operas, and produced a piece of music, the ‘Bobolink,’ played and whistled all that season, as the most taking and popular of tunes!

In 1865, returning to New York, he appeared at the Winter Garden, on Oct. 30 of that year, and there played for a few months. In 1867 and 1868 he was at the Olympic, formerly Laura Keene’s Theatre, on the east side of Broadway, just above Houston Street, and at this time brought out, at Wallack’s, his version of ‘Little Nell and the Marchioness,’ for Miss Lotta Crabtree. In June, 1868, he took the principal part in his new play, the ‘Lottery of Life,’ at Wallack’s. On Jan. 25, 1869, he opened, as manager, Brougham’s Theatre—now the Madison Square—with his new comedy, ‘Better Late than Never;’ producing, afterwards, his capital burlesque, ‘Much Ado About a Merchant of Venice.’ But he was unable to bear long with the proprietor of this theatre, James Fisk, and his favorites, with whom he was forced to come into constant contact; and on April 3, he played in ‘His Last Legs,’ in which (and on which) he walked from out the theatre, never again to enter there. This was, also, his last managerial experiment.

After this, he played at Wallack’s and at Daly’s, for a while; but these later years were full of illness and of weariness to him, and he began to feel—howbeit unjustly—that he was lagging superfluously on the

stage. On Oct. 25, 1879, he was seen for the last time on the boards, playing the detective, *Felix O'Reilly*, in Boucicault's 'Rescued.' On June 7, 1880, he died. His last years had been made easier by the assured payment of an annuity, procured by faithful friends from the receipts of several simultaneous benefits, given for him in the New York theatres.

He was twice married : to Miss Emma Williams, in 1838—a superb beauty, and a tolerable actress ;—and in 1847, to Miss Annette Nelson—a pretty and petite creature, and a very poor actress. The former died in 1865, the latter in 1870.

John Brougham's name appears on nearly all the cherished play-bills of my boyhood, and in my mental gallery of theoric portraiture, none is earlier, not one is fresher to-day, than his face and figure. For his was a very vivid personality ; and its predominant impression—even now, after all succeeding impressions—is that of the most lovable of natures. It is certain that the individuality of the man affects his audience unconsciously through the actor, and all his art cannot conceal his personal character, be it hard, cold, and repellent, or manly, kindly and attractive. These latter epithets fit perfectly to John Brougham : and back of all he assumed on the scene, one always felt the presence of a delicate nature, a cultured mind, a sweet, sensitive, sympathetic soul. In his broadest farce, even in his blustering, blundering Irishman ;—and surely his was the only endurable stage Irishman I have ever seen : nay, it was actually a comical Irishman, moving one to mirth, instead of to madness !—even in these parts, his native elegance peeped out at times, disclosing something fine and

rare in the man himself. And what a gracious, graceful, gallant gentleman was there under the dash and swagger of his *Captain Murphy Maguire*, his *Gentleman from Ireland*, and such light comedy creations! But, above all, his winning manliness shone out through the disguises of his *Columbus* and his *Shylock*, and made them the most poetic, pensive, pathetic of beings; yet wholly human with honest humor, and fat with fun. He first gave to burlesque its crowning comic conceit of utter earnestness, of solemn seriousness; the which is now vaunted as a brand-new Gilbertian invention.

Whatever his part, high or low or broad, he brought with him on the scene his own atmosphere, breezy and bracing, and we—who had been awaiting it with zest—breathed it for the time, and were the better for it. His face was full of sweetness and sincerity; his carriage had a natural elegance and dignity; his voice touched one with its genial, genuine ring; and none of those who were wont to watch him can forget—it is not too trivial and too fond a record—the beauty of his hands, and the unstudied and unconscious grace of his management of them.

He was admirable in every part he undertook, and “touched nothing he did not adorn.” These words, spoken by Dr. Johnson of Goldsmith, apply aptly to Brougham; between whom, and his not more gifted and lovable compatriot, a just likeness has been found. But, with all the poetry and romance of his nature, Brougham did not shine in pathetic parts. He was, in revenge, uproariously funny in broadly comic characters, such as *O'Callaghan* in ‘His Last Legs;’ as *Box*—with Walcot as *Cox*; and as the intruding

Stranger in ‘An Unwarrantable Intrusion’—with Burton as the bewildered and bedevilled householder. There was a rollicking roll in his voice—with just a delicious bit of brogue—a bluff and breezy bearing, a *verve* and vigor and unforced drollery in all he did, which were irresistible. In broadly eccentric parts—such as *Stout* in ‘Money,’ *Sir Lucius O’Trigger* in the ‘Rivals,’ *Micawber*, *Bagstock*, *Bunsby*—he was unrivalled in his day; and will never be equalled for us who saw him in these parts. In a higher range, in light comedy characters—*Dazzle*, *Captain Murphy Maguire*, *Dr. Savage*, and the rest of that class—he was humorous, polished, full of charm. But he was incomparably greatest in his own plays and in parts of his own creation; and in burlesque, far and away above all else and all others. His *Powhattan*, *Columbus*, *Shylock*, dwell in my memory, with their wondrous drollery, their mad flow of animal spirits, their frequent rise to eloquence, and to most melodious verse. His lines on the pipe of tobacco and its appeal to our five senses, in *Powhattan*, and his vision of the new world, in *Columbus*,—given with his musical rich voice, and his exquisite purity of diction—sound in my ears, today, as a strain of music heard but yesterday.

For fifty years he was constantly in evidence before the public; he produced over seventy-five dramatic pieces; he acted in a great variety of parts; and not one of the thousands who saw him but was gladdened harmlessly, and made better by him and by his works. His worth and sincerity as a man were equal to his merits as an actor; and with regret we take leave of a life so laborious, so useful, so clean and so honorable.

BENJAMIN ELLIS MARTIN.

Becoming tired of travel, and being of a domestic nature, I came to New York to stay, and here produced at the Broadway Theatre, then under Colonel Mann (on the corner of Leonard Street), a five-act comedy, entitled 'Romance and Reality,' which had been offered in London and refused. It had a very gratifying success, and you may imagine how much more gratified I was when I subsequently played it in London at the theatre where it had been refused by the manager, Mr. Buckstone, and heard him express astonishment at his oversight and neglect. A similar occurrence took place in London when I was managing a place in connection with two or three others. On still another occasion I offered an extravaganza called 'Life in the Clouds' to Mme. Vestris, whose specialty was such pieces. Later on she sat in the private box of a theatre the night it was played, and sent for me, for I was always a favorite with her. She said, "Why didn't you let me have that piece for my theatre, Mr. Brougham?" I replied, "My dear madame, you had it in your possession for three months." Sometimes, therefore, you see that an error of judgment on the part of a manager is a costly affair. I have no doubt that many a golden opportunity is lost to-day. After all, play-writing is like a lottery—there are more blanks than prizes. Managers are not inclined to permit those who have not won their spurs to come to the front. But to return from this diversion.

I then joined Burton's Theatre in Chambers Street, where I produced 'Dombey & Son,' in which Burton made such a great success as *Captain Cuttle*. He paid me for it a small sum, and after three or four

weeks said he thought he had done about enough. I answered, "Very well, if you are satisfied, I don't want any more." The play was taken from the stage for a week, but at the end of that time it was reproduced and held the boards for two seasons, and laid the foundation of Mr. Burton's fortune. Then came the '*Serious Family*.' In this was developed that quality which I seemed to possess—and, by the way, it is your own fault that I am compelled to speak so much about myself—that quality which I seemed to possess of extemporaneous talking to an audience. It occurred in this manner—at the end of the piece the audience invariably called me out for a speech. Sometimes it was one thing, sometimes another, but always a lot of nonsense, born of the moment, until I came to regard it as an intolerable nuisance. I don't know whether Burton liked it or not, but, at any rate, on one occasion he rushed on the stage while I was speaking, and assuming to be very much annoyed, exclaimed, "Don't believe a word that comes out of his Irish mouth ; he's so and so and so ;" I don't remember what he did say, but I answered him on the spot, and a war of words followed. The audience fairly yelled with delight, and after that they looked for and demanded that quarrel as a part of the business of the evening.

I remained at Burton's two seasons, and at the end of that time, as he could not increase my salary, friends aided me in securing a theatre of my own, on the corner of Broome Street, which became known as Brougham's Lyceum.

While at Wallack's I had a severe surgical operation performed which for some time kept me on my back.

It was in this interval, with nothing to do but think, that I conceived and wrote '*Pocahontas*.' It didn't make much of a sensation at first, for it was one of those things which had, as it were, to "grow" upon an audience. Still, it was nicely played, Charley Walcott being *Captain John Smith*, Peters the *Dutchman*, Miss Hodson *Pocahontas*, and so on. The piece was gradually rising in the public estimation, until one evening Mr. Lester Wallack came into the dressing room where Walcott and myself were preparing for the performance with the announcement that *Pocahontas* was missing and could not be found anywhere in the city.

What was to be done under the circumstances we couldn't conceive. All sorts of plans were projected, but none would work. At last, in desperation, I said to Charley Walcott, "Suppose we do it without *Pocahontas*." "Agreed!" said Charley, who, by the way, was always bright, quick and witty, "we'll do it anyhow!" Mr. Wallack went on the stage and made the announcement that "owing to the absence of Miss Hodson (the truth is she had eloped with somebody), the play would be produced without her. Messrs. Walcott and Brougham having kindly consented to fill her part," etc. For a moment a dead silence reigned; but directly the fun of the thing was taken in and the people fairly screamed. We went on. First, Charley would say, "This is what *Miss Pocahontas* would remark if she were present," and then he would talk to himself. "Where is Pokey?" he would exclaim, to which I would reply, "Lost among the icebergs on Broadway—Broadway was then a mass of refrigeration—Ah! but if she were here I know she would answer you in this way," and then I

gave her speech. At the end, when it became necessary to join their hands in matrimony, we didn't know exactly what to do, but looking around the stage I saw a broom and seizing it, I boldly advanced to the front, saying as I handed it to Charley, "Take her, my boy, and be happy." It brought the house down, but it was a frightfully dangerous experiment.

The public, however, wanted it repeated, and it shows what a good-natured body a New York audience is when its sympathetic humor is fairly touched. It is one of the pleasant recollections of that piece that there was scarcely a camp in the army during the war, as I have been told, in which officers and men did not rehearse and enjoy 'Pocahontas.'

JOHN BROUGHAM: reported in the *New York Herald*, Aug. 26, 1877.

Of all my plays, the 'Lottery of Life' has certainly been the most profitable to me, although originally written as a burlesque upon the sensation of the time. When it was first produced, I exaggerated the sensational parts of it, and it was something which I expected would be horrifying; instead of which, I found it was taken in perfect earnest, and so I rushed home with the manuscript and softened down the strong points of it, and, after three or four representations, it settled down, a not altogether impossible, though somewhat improbable piece. It did not cost me much trouble to write. The comedies I produce cost me a great deal of time and mental labor, and the whole of them never brought me as much money as this 'Lottery of Life.' My own opinion of the play is

that it is not good enough to win the success it has achieved, and not bad enough to receive the animadversions of the hypercritical. There is a vein of probability running through it, and some rather good philosophy, I think tolerably well expressed. Altogether I think I have written four five-act comedies, and the number of adaptations, burlesques and minor pieces of various kinds I really cannot pretend to remember.

JOHN BROUGHAM: reported in *Boston Times*, Oct. 25, 1874.

John Brougham for thirty years and more, was one of New York's prime favorites, and his name is associated with many of the drama's brightest and worthiest triumphs. His inexhaustible flow of spirits in his best days pervaded all his acting, and invested the most unattractive part with an alluring charm, as many a prosaic spot in nature becomes enchanted land by the music of falling waters. Add to this exuberant vitality a rich endowment of mother wit, a bright intelligence, keen sympathy and appreciation, and rare personal magnetism, and you have before you "glorious John," whose hearty voice it was always a pleasure to hear and whose face beaming with humor, was always welcomed with delight. Brougham played *Bunsby* and *Bagstock*, investing the oracular utterances of the tar, and the roughness and toughness and "dev'lish" slyness of the major, with a humor and a spirit all his own. We laugh outright as we think of that scene where *Cuttle* is being rapidly reduced to agony and despair by *Mrs. MacStinger*, and is rescued therefrom by *Bunsby*, who, with a hoarse "Avast, my

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lass ; avast ! " advances solemnly on the redoubtable female ; and with a soothing gravity ejects the entire *MacStinger* family, following in the rear himself—*Cuttle* meanwhile gazing in speechless astonishment at the unexpected succor, until the door is closed ; and then drawing an immense breath and turning towards the audience his inimitable face, exclaims in a tone of profound respect and admiration, "There's Wisdom !" It was a great treat to see Burton and Brougham together. The two actors were so ready, so full of wit, so alive to each other's points and by-play, that any fanciful interpolation of the text or humorous impromptu by the one was instantly responded to by the other ; and the house was often thrown into convulsions of merriment by these purely unpremeditated sallies.

It goes without saying that Brougham's Hibernian delineations were perfect, and to the manor born. Many an Irish farce we recall, during his stay at Burton's, to which he gave a new lease of life ; and we congratulate ourselves that our memory holds record of having once seen him as *Sir Lucius O'Trigger*, the only cast in our experience, wherein Sheridan's creation found a fitting representative.

W.M. L. KEESE : 'Life of Burton,' pp. 55-6, 57-8, 64.

We cannot pay our compliments to all our actors, but it would be a grievous offence to omit mention of genial John Brougham. The excellent "J. B." insists now on playing only in his own dramas, but it is more satisfactory to think of him as stolid *Jack Bunsby*, or glorious *Joe Bagstock*, or dashing *Sir Lucius*

O'Trigger. In each of these he was inimitable. Of all our Irish actors, he has been the only one who could act the Irish gentleman ; and the 'Rivals,' without Mr. Brougham as *Sir Lucius*, is difficult to endure. Mr. B. writes a brilliant extravaganza, and acts burlesques in a broad, rollicking, highly enjoyable way. He would do well to revive his burlesque of 'Metamora,' written fifteen or twenty years ago, in which his imitations of Forrest are capital. There is a touch of melancholy in John's countenance now, that was not so before, and he seems to act without that gusto and relish that characterized him in the Chambers Street days with Burton.

Galaxy, Feb., 1868.

John Brougham is not a David Garrick, by any means, but he is, in his own way, a genius almost as remarkable, not only as a player, but as a writer and an adapter of plays. He is personally, and in his profession, undoubtedly the most popular man on the American stage to-day, a popularity he achieved on his first appearance, and which he has steadily maintained during the thirty or more years of his residence among us. Brougham and his Broughamism are so familiar to us of this generation, however; we see him so often, so easily, and in so many parts; he is so much a matter of course, that possibly he is not so much appreciated as he should be, or as much appreciated and praised as he will be in a generation or two to come, when his plays have become classic (perhaps) and his playing has that halo of perfection about it that only tradition, retrospection, and a sense of loss, can lend; when Brougham's *Pow-Ha-Tan*, in his own

'Pocahontas,' and his *Bunshy*, in his own dramatization of 'Dombey & Son,' itself only a recollection even now, will be ranked (perhaps) with Garrick's *Hamlet*, or with Kean's *Richard III*.

LAURENCE HUTTON: 'Plays and Players,' chap. vi., p. 50.

The 'Veteran' received a sumptuous setting on Mr. Wallack's stage, last night ; and, viewed merely as a spectacle, was beautiful. The great hall in the *Sultan's* palace, wherein the rescue of the Christian prisoners is effected, was a bewildering pageant of starry lights and gorgeous colors. And the piece was superbly acted. Mr. Brougham, playing *Oft-an-agam*, reveled in the comic absurdity of his situations and the glib nonsense of his inflated language ; and yet he contrived to give the part a positive substratum of nature and character. The well-known cow case—so significant and useful as a type of New York justice—proved as mirthful as in former days, and elicited the merriest laughter.

New York Tribune, Feb. 13, 1877.

At one time while in Boston, John Gilbert, John Brougham, and one or two others who have since made their mark, were playing together. Business being bad and their salaries being much in arrears, the manager decided to withdraw and allow them to conduct the establishment on the share system. Gilbert, Brougham, and the other principal people in the company agreed to this, at the same time pledging themselves to pay the salaries of the lesser members of the troupe. Under this arrangement the theatre

went on for a week, and at the end of that time Mr. Gilbert and the others who were associated with him in the management came together for a settlement. First they paid salaries as agreed, and divided the money which remained among themselves. Gilbert received for the services of himself and wife just \$3, while Brougham's share amounted to the magnificent sum of 87 cents ! Walking down the street afterward, "Genial John Brougham" invited his companions into a tavern, and throwing down his dimes and pennies upon the counter, cried out cheerily, "There, drink it up, boys, we'll trust to Providence for a fresh installment."

HOWARD CARROLL : 'Twelve Famous Americans,'
John Gilbert.

Those who have known and loved John Brougham—and of him truly it may be said, "none knew him but to love him"—should be grateful that his earthly pilgrimage is over. For a long time he had been in sickness and sorrow. The malady from which he suffered was very painful, and it was incurable. He was more than seventy years of age ; he had seen many of his friends drop away ; he had outlived his once brilliant popularity with the public ; he was, without being aware of it, losing his intellectual vigor ; and the circumstances of his fortune were such as constantly preyed upon his mind. He still labored with his pen, and he still nourished plans for the future ; but these labors were mostly frustrated by the weakness of age, and these plans were mostly of an impracticable character, and destined to disappointment. There seemed to be nothing left for him but trouble, and, therefore, the hearts to whom he was endeared should find their

comfort in the thought that his toil-worn, sensitive, suffering spirit is now beyond the reach of earthly care and pain.

**Alive, we would have changed his lot—
We would not change it now.**

The life of John Brougham, notable for many things, has been especially remarkable for two qualities—its brilliancy and its goodness. Fifty years of it he passed upon the stage ; and, both as actor and author, his influence always tended to gladden and sweeten the human experience of which he was a part. The reason of this was that, back of the actor and author there was a true man. His heart was large, warm and charitable ; his mind was eager, hopeful, cheerful and actively creative ; his instincts were virtuous and kindly ; his temperament was gentle ; and his consideration for others—which extended to the humblest of living creatures, was thoughtful of the most minute point of delicacy, found excuse for every fault, and gave forgiveness for almost every wrong—sprang from the spontaneous desire that everybody should be happy. His thoughts, and very often his talk—in familiar conversations that we have had with him, for many and many a year—dwelt upon the great disparity of conditions in society, the struggles and sufferings of the poor, and the relation of evil to the infirmities of human nature. He did not live for himself alone, but he was profoundly and practically interested in others ; and this feeling, as potent as it was genuine, animated all his life, colored all his work, and so commended him to the responsive sympathy and good will of his generation that his name, on every lip, was the name of a friend.

In his writings as in his acting—though he was stronger and more versatile as an author than as an actor—the characteristic quality was a sort of off-hand dash and glittering merriment, a commingling of bluff, breezy humor with winning manliness. The atmosphere of his works was always that of sincerity, but it never had the insipidity of serene goodness. He was highly intellectual, and at times poetic and romantic ; but he was human and he was gay, and he loved to saturate life with the Celtic sparkle. His rich, rolling voice, with a touch of the brogue in it, sounds in all he wrote, and his happy, infectious laughter, for all who recall his acting, will ring on in memory as long as they shall live. The scope and variety of his labors was very great. He threw himself with the keenest zest into the passing moment ; he dreaded no task ; he shunned no emergency ; he attempted all sorts of composition, to which either his agile fancy impelled him, or which the need of the hour exacted : and, while he was not equally successful in every line of literature or every walk of the stage, he produced a surprising quantity of sterling dramatic work, and he acted many and diversified parts in a most admirable manner. During the first twenty years of his life—which were passed in and around the city of Dublin, where he was born, May 9, 1810,—he was provided with ample opportunities of liberal education ; and these he improved, acquiring knowledge, however, as he once said of himself, rather by absorption than application ; and all his life he was a reader and a student ; so that his labors were based on a solid foundation of good mental discipline. In other words, he was a scholar ; and the

operations of his genius, however impulsive and erratic they sometimes may have been, were usually guided and restrained by that knowledge of the intellectual field, and that sense of proportion and harmony, of fitness and of taste, which only scholarship can give.

Wm. WINTER: in *New York Tribune*, June 8, 1880.

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